PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

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On Ernest Hemingway

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The Madison Avenue Villain

ANGUS WILSON
The Whites in South Africa

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SELMA FRAIBERG
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Genet, White and Black

Contributions by John Ashbery, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Goldwater, Elizabeth Hardwick, Randall Jarrell, Don W. Kleine, Hans Meyerhoff, Adrienne Rich, Anne Sexton, John Thompson, Edzia Weisberg

DOUBLE ISSUE

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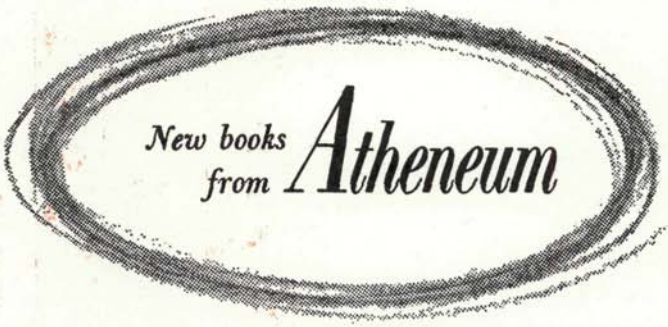

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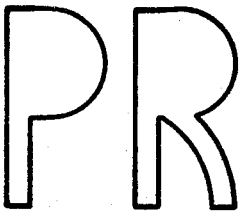

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ROBERT GREER COHN, founding editor of **Yale French Studies,** is Associate Professor of French at Stanford University. He is the author of **The Writer's Way in France,** published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

ANNE SEXTON is a young poet who has just been elected to The Society of Scholars at The Radcliffe Institute For Independent Study. She is presently at work on a second book of poems; her first, **To Bedlam and Part Way Back** was brought out by Houghton Mifflin in 1960.

DON W. KLEINE is a member of the English Department of Cornell University. He has published in **The Nation, Accent,** and other magazines. This is his first appearance in **Partisan Review.**

ROBERT BRUSTEIN, an assistant professor at Columbia University, holds a Guggenheim Fellowship for this year. He is at work on a book, **The Theatre of Revolt,** which Atlantic, Little Brown will publish.

THALIA SELZ, who is appearing in **Partisan Review** for the first time, has published short stories in **The Virginia Quarterly Review** and **Chicago Review.** She is now writing a novel.

ROBERT GOLDWATER, director of the Museum of Primitive Art, teaches the history of modern art at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.

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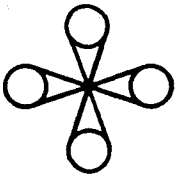

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ONE LAW FOR THE LION

> But what a book, they both agreed, would be the real story of Hemingway, not those he writes but the confessions of the real Ernest Hemingway.
> —Gertrude Stein

Not long ago we saw him, a bearded smiling Falstaff, on the cover of *Life*. On the cover he looked good. A composite image of the man, the artist, and the legend. Inside there were pictures of bulls, bullfighters, good food, good wine, and good companions. There was also writing. How long has it been since the man and the legend have stood up better than the *writing?* Now that the lists are closed (excepting the manuscripts he did not choose to publish) the facts are disturbing. It is thirty years since he published *A Farewell to Arms*. If Hemingway had died at that time the body of his best work would have been behind him. Ahead were five novels, but only two major achievements: *Death in the Afternoon* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. There was always craft. Disciplined squads of emotions, disciplined words. But the verdict of Sunday, July 2nd, forces upon us the knowledge that he had long lived with—the best of his work lay far in the past.

To the committed artist—the artist of which Hemingway is the symbol—an unproductive imaginative life is less a life than a burden. I do not believe he was deceived by the world-wide clamor and praise of *The Old Man and the Sea,* an expression of the world's goodwill and affection rather than its taste. The homage of the world is complex and destroys as much as it celebrates, in particular the world that he helped to create. More

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than ten years earlier he had let drop that the *Big* one was in a bank vault in Cuba—this Big one was his ace in the hole. How well it tells us that what he was doing, in his own opinion, was not enough. It is not like a man—a man like Hemingway—to let his *Big* fish trail under water while he stands on the pier, empty-handed, with his arms outstretched. In the fable of the old man and the sea the moral may be more pointed than we imagined—his tormenting self-doubt more justified than we would believe.

With luck, courage, and great talent, a man's life might prove to be of some interest, but seldom as interesting as his death. With death his life is something more than the sum of its parts. The parts of Hemingway are memorable and the world has waited for a verdict. How well he knew the ways of the world! Even the young man from Oak Park would have told us that death joins more than it tears asunder, and that it is harder to kill a legend than a man.

Of the parts of Hemingway, man, writer, and legend, the writer is vulnerable. He tells us—

So far, about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after. . . .

and

I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and most fundamental is violent death.

After the lessons of writing were over what led him to seek out war, the safari, the calculated risk? Was it for raw material, or is there a hint that he would welcome death—as he did life—on his own terms? The age questions everything, answers nothing, and he gave these unanswered questions their style.

Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.

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As the writing fell off, the man and the legend became the major work of fiction. The style that shaped so many others also shaped Ernest Hemingway. His art can be measured in the faces we still see around us, but the fullest measure was visible in his own. We learned from his life, from his art, and since it cannot be helped we now learn from his death—but there is no profit in it. We merely learn how little we can be taught. We cannot be taught courage, how to avoid self-destruction, how to preserve or salvage our talents, but we did possibly learn that a man can die without merely having passed away.

In an interview in 1954 Hemingway talked about his good times with James Joyce: "We would go out to drink and Joyce would fall into a fight. He couldn't even see the man so he'd say: 'Deal with him, Hemingway! Deal with him!' "

We share, with Joyce, the confidence that Hemingway would. It is out of this *feeling* that the man, and the facts, emerge into the legend to which we all contribute. To the Danish journalist Vinding, Joyce had this to say of Hemingway:*

"He's a good writer, Hemingway. He writes as he is. We like him. He's a big powerful peasant, as strong as a buffalo. A sportsman. And ready to live the life he writes about. He would never have written it if his body had not allowed him to live it."

A peasant? The description must have pleased him, and what pleases a man is what shapes him: big, powerful, strong as a buffalo. Is it the man who shapes the legend, or the legend that shapes the man?

At what point did the image of the man take precedence over the books, and the legend precedence over the man? On July 2nd, which image came first to mind? The brooding Viking in the Karsh portrait, the man's man on the safari, the author

* Richard Ellmann: *James Joyce.*

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at his desk, the man who went four rounds with Braddock, or the old man, the big fish, and the sea?

A memorable but characteristic economy dictates these successive fashions. We may be amused, or shocked, but we need not apologize. This too is *style*—as unchanging as *his* style. The personality of Hemingway cannot be isolated from the man who wrote the books, or the man who is the legend—the authority of one resides in the other. He is all of a piece. The personality cult of a mass-cult age may use this image as we use brand labels, but that is our problem before it is his.

Some thirty years ago Laura Riding made this comment—

> More and more the poet has been made to conform to literature instead of literature to the poet—literature being the name given by criticism to works inspired or obedient to criticism. Less and less is the poet permitted to rely on personal authority. The very word genius, formerly used to denote the power to intensify a sense of life into a sense of literature, has been boycotted by criticism; not so much because it has become gross and meaningless through sentimentality as because professional literature develops a shame of the person, a snobbism against the personal self-reliance which is the nature of genius.

There was no shame of the person in Hemingway. Personal self-reliance seems to be both the hallmark of the man and the legend. That is good. But is it what Hemingway had? On the escutcheon of his self-reliance, along with bulls, fish, and other heraldic symbols, are cryptic signs as well as curious blemishes. Battle scars? We have to look at the record.

The most curious example of Hemingway's talent is a novella, *The Torrents of Spring,* a burlesque-parody of the style of Sherwood Anderson. An older man, Anderson had been his friend and benefactor. Why did the young lion, the buffalo, turn on him? In his memoirs Anderson tells us this:

> I got a letter from Hemingway. This after he had written and published *The Torrents of Spring.* It was certainly the most self-

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conscious and probably the most completely patronizing letter ever written.

He spoke of the book as something fatal to me. He had, he said, written it on an impulse, taking only six weeks to do it. It was intended to bring to an end, once and for all, the notion there was any worth in my work. This, he said, was a thing he had hated doing, because of his personal regard for me, and he had done it in the interest of literature. Literature, I was to understand, was bigger than either of us.

An impulse lasting six weeks is something more than an impulse. *The Torrents of Spring* is the second book of a young and already acclaimed writer, whose time and energy might have been more profitably spent. How explain it? Momentary aberrations find their release in letters and cafe brawls. *The Torrents of Spring* is a sustained, carefully planned, and extremely clever effort of annihilation. On the evidence Hemingway felt compelled to clear the field of the only competition he considered serious. It is not the act, to put it charitably, of a self-reliant man. It is the skillfully tactical ploy of a man who is scared. Not of lions and bulls or buffaloes, but of competitors. He took this shot at Anderson from ambush with serious intent to bring him down. Hemingway the sportsman? This too, apparently, on his own terms.

In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" we find this comment—

He remembered poor Julian and his romantic awe of them [the rich] and how he had started a story once that began, "The very rich are different from you and me." And how some one had said to Julian, Yes they have more money.

At that moment poor Julian, F. Scott Fitzgerald, was poor indeed. Hemingway's books are ornamented and flawed with witty asides, meant to be lethal, dealing with selected friends and foes. Fitzgerald, his friend, was a stricken, burdened man, with a few years to live. Was *poor Julian* designed to cheer him up? The impartiality with which Hemingway would deal with

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a friend, as well as a foe, is not one of the symptoms of self-reliance. He is still strafing the field of competitors. On the evidence self-reliance may be part of the man on the safari, and part of the legend, but not a part of the author of *The Torrents of Spring*. In the man there is more than sufficient to support a respectable legend, but we do not need the legend to respect the man—only the superman.

He would be the champ, and by 1932 he was. *Death in the Afternoon* is many things, it contains the best and the worst of the writer, and it finds him at the moment he stands at the summit of his world.

The great thing is to last and get your work done and see and hear and learn and understand; and write when there is something that you know; and not before; and not too damned much after.

Was there a writer alive in whose ears these words did not ring? Perhaps two. Sherwood Anderson and Gertrude Stein. Just a few months later Gertrude Stein issued her own version of old worlds conquered, putting the record, and her readers, straight on many things. One was Ernest Hemingway. Alice B. Toklas tells us:

Hemingway had been formed by the two of them [Stein and Anderson] and they were both a little proud and a little ashamed of the work of their minds. . . . They admitted that Hemingway was yellow, he is, Gertrude Stein insisted, just like the flat-boat men on the Mississippi river described by Mark Twain.

Hemingway yellow? The malice of Stein's attack is obvious, but she did not throw her barbs at random, or merely tip them with venom. The wounded lion did not roar. The buffalo did not paw the ground. Perhaps it was not the injustice of the attack that led Hemingway to ignore it. He knew his adversary was his master at this sort of cape work, and he had been the first to strike a low blow. Without excuse or provocation he had attacked a friend, Sherwood Anderson.

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There is evidence that Stein's verbal shrapnel hurt Hemingway more, and stayed with him longer, than that he received on the Italian front. Under the buffalo hide he was both tender and vulnerable. A lasting preference for men of action, rather than words, dates from this verbal mawling—good drinking, good shooting, and good fishing companions. Good writers are out. Such self-reliance is another form of exile—he had the verbal shooting range to *himself*. He was the champ, in competition with *himself*. At this point we remember that shadow-boxing was one of his favorite pastimes. At parties, especially. It was dead men, as he said in *Esquire,* that one had to beat.

Self-parody, in both his life and his art, are the fruits of the last decade. The man who entered the trees across the river never fully emerged from E. B. White's bar across the street. He is all but invisible in the recent pages of *Life*. *The Torrents of Spring,* in which he served notice on his friend, Sherwood Anderson, is as nothing to the notice *The Dangerous Summer* served on Ernest Hemingway, author of *Death in the Afternoon* and other books.

In a letter to Maxwell Perkins he said that he had "not been at all hardboiled since July 8, 1918—on the night of which I discovered that that also was vanity."

In *Men at War*:

. . . I had a bad time until I figured it out that nothing could happen to me that had not happened to all men before me.

In *A Farewell to Arms*:

If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.

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In *Death in the Afternoon*:

There comes a place in the guidebook where you must say do not come back until you have skied, had sexual intercourse, shot quail or grouse, or been to the bullfight so that you will know what we are talking about.

That much we know beyond a doubt. What he was talking about. Life and death, and that dance he would describe as grace under pressure. But as for the story, there is one and one only that he would tell us. Nature is good, man is a mess, but Nature will prevail. "We'll all be gone before it's changed too much and if no deluge comes when we are gone it still will rain in summer in the north and hawks will nest in the Cathedral at Santiago and in La Granja. . . . it makes no difference if the fountains play or not."

The "Big Two-Hearted River" that rises in Michigan flows, like the Liffey, around the world. In it he dips his line, and hauls out the changeless immortal trout.

Holding him near the tail, hard to hold, alive, in his hand, he whacked him against the log. The trout quivered, rigid. Nick laid him on the log in the shade and broke the neck of the other fish the same way. He laid them side by side on the log. They were fine trout.

In Spain—

They were all about the same size. I laid them out, side by side, all their heads pointing the same way, and looked at them. They were beautifully colored and firm and hard from the cold water. . . . I took the trout ashore, washed them in the cold, smoothly heavy water above the dam, and then picked some ferns and packed them all in a bag, three trout on a layer of ferns, then another layer of ferns, then three more trout, and then covered them with ferns. They looked nice in the ferns, and now the bag was bulky, and I put it in the shade of the tree.

We have Harold Loeb's testimony that these fish were never

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caught. Not in Spain. No, they are Hemingway's fish, as unchanging as those of Braque. In Italy—

> In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels.

But no fish. No, the next fish would be the Big one, and come from the sea. The only Hemingway fish that might be said to have got away.

This is refinement, not repetition. A testing of the blade on the chosen material, as a bullfighter tests his capework on the bull. On this material the blade seldom loses its edge. In time, understandably, the materials are chosen to suit the blade. It becomes the function of the style, not the author, to choose the scene, select the cast, and speak the appropriate words. The simplicity lies in the style, not in the material. The Spanish language is used as a simplifying agent where the situation is often complex. Hemingway knew as well as his friend Fitzgerald that "the very rich are different"—very different indeed, but such a fact did not suit the dictates of the Hemingway style. Complicated types enter this world only to lose their complications. Man must appear simple so that Nature will emerge complex. The restoration of NATURE, writ large, a paradise lost, would seem to be the passion behind Hemingway's reduction of man: the raw material he was able to supply himself. But whether Nature likes it or not, Man too is a piece of Nature, and it is why his disillusion is so often grained with hope.

We are a young nation, but premature loss of creative power is already an old American custom. The exceptions have been among the exiles, such as Eliot and Henry James. Foreign air helped, but did not do as much for Hemingway. The destructive agent was of his own invention—an inflexible style. We see it in the man, in the legend, as well as in the books. Several years

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ago, in *The Territory Ahead,* I made my peace with this style in these terms:

When the young man Hemingway came to the edge of the clearing, when he saw what man had left in the place of nature, he found it something more than an unpleasant shock. He found it unacceptable. In that judgment he has never wavered. It is expressed with finality in his exile. In this feeling, and in his exile, he is not alone, but being an artist he has been able to give his judgment a singular permanence. As the style of Faulkner grew out of his rage—out of the impotence of his rage—the style of Hemingway grew out of the depth and nuance of his disenchantment. Only a man who had believed, with a child's purity of faith, in some haunting dream of life, in its vistas of promise, is capable of forging his disillusion into a work of art. It is love of life that Hemingway's judgment of life reveals. Between the lines of his prose, between the passage and the reader, there is often that far sound of running water, a pine-scented breeze that blows from a cleaner and finer world. It is this air that makes the sight of so many corpses bearable. Invariably it is there—a higher order than the one we see before us in operation—as if the legend of the past were stamped, like a signature, on his brow. We have never had a more resolute moralist. A dream of the good life haunts the scene of all the bad life he so memorably observes, and when under his spell it is the dream of the good life that we possess. For such an artist, should there be anything but praise? Could there be anything conceivably impotent about such a style? It is when we come to brood on his consistency—on the man who does not change, or seem aware of it—that we see that the author, as well as the reader, has been under a spell, the same spell—the spell of a style. The consistency lies in what the style will permit him to think, to feel, and to say.

. . .This style—like the clear water that flows at the heart of all of his fiction—sounds the note of enchantment to the very disenchantment it anticipates. The reader grasps, immediately, that this man is not so tough as he looks. Quite the contrary, he looks and sounds so tough because his heart is so soft. Behind the armor of his prose, the shell of his exile, lurks our old friend Huck Finn,

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American dreamer, the clean-cut boy who just wishes Aunt Sally would leave him alone, who wants nothing more, nor less, than a clearing of his own in the wilderness. The dream itself he left unchanged, he merely moved to a smaller river, but he brought to it a style that revealed the dream to itself.

. . . In the interests of this style things remain as they are, they do not change. It is a lens of the finest precision; it records, accurately, the author's field of vision, but the price of the performance is that the *field* must remain the same. Time—in the sense of development—must stand still. The timeless quality of the Hemingway snapshot is truly timeless—growth and change have been removed. The illusion of things as they are is raised to a point that has seldom been equaled; a frieze-like sense of permanence enshrines the Big Two-Hearted River and its world-wide tributaries. . . . Good fish and running water serve him as the means of coming to terms with life.

With such a writer, appraisal and reappraisal never end. With his death, the man—and with the man, the writing—grow more complex. He is many men, and only a few would fit into the books the style dictated. That fellow was self-reliant, self-assured, and in spite of his disclaimer, a pretty tough hombre. We shall not soon forget how he looked, and never how he wrote. But it is little wonder, now the lists are closed, that he did not write that book Gertrude Stein suggested: the Confessions of Ernest Hemingway. Strange, indeed, that he did not write it—as he did not write the Big one looming on the horizon —because the function of the style made it impossible. It called for a simpler fellow than Ernest Hemingway actually was. We must come to terms with this composite image for ourselves. On one point, however, there is no question, we know a piece of the continent has fallen, and there is no need to ask for whom it is the bell tolls.

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Thalia Selz

THE EDUCATION OF A QUEEN

Where is that green iron gate, swinging to with an easy clang, hurled carelessly backward by my young hand as if batted by an Amazon?

I woke precipitously last night, teetering back from the dizzy lip of tuinal sleep, hearing that pipe-stem gate creak and slam, and the sleeping pill stuck in my throat like a chip of blue and red ceramic tile. For no reason I was as afraid as if I were a girl again—an adolescent girl whose periods have just begun and who is panic-struck by the magnitude of her sins.

I did not get up and fling open the French windows to inspect my charming Tyrolean wooden balcony, my geranium-box, my compulsive *Seebach* rushing pell-mell and churning up foamy spittle and make-believe racket like a mountain brook in the movies. Or the soft, midnight walls of my valley—in the daytime cropped, domesticated slopes: tilting, hummocky mattresses for cows to lie on. At night cradled in wood—intimate, old-fashioned wooden fences; wooden turnstiles, the spokes crossed with stiff ceremony like arms in a folk-dance or children's games (". . . take the key and lock her up, my fair lay-dee-e-e!"); or long, cumbersome wooden gates, slow as a cow.

I knew it was not a cow gate. With a damp, mossy fear born of guilt and drugs I fixed that swift, ominous, metallic *clank* as an intrusion from another world. I curled up icily, trying this gate and that, poking and prying through the rubbish-heap of childhood, floating over games and lawns, deep-sea swimming among sidewalks, collie dogs, secret huts, dried skin

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from once-young faces, old people's coffins. The young never die.

I switched on the bedside lamp. I was clammy-nosed, drunk on sedative, and absurdly terrified because I had abruptly remembered and could not cry for my childhood acquaintance ("friend" is too strong a word), Aggie, whom I had not seen for at least twenty years, who was still in the fifth grade when she was fourteen years old, and who was the simplest, most absolute and apocalyptic Catholic it has ever been my misfortune to meet. A few months before my mother had mentioned in a moment of brisk reminiscence that Aggie's aunt had told Norbert Leinfelder who had told her that Aggie had died of uterine cancer last summer, having given birth to three living children and one stillborn.

"German Catholic!" snorted my mother. "You'd think they'd learn, but they never do!"

My first thought then and last night, too, was thank—well, just *thank*—for all the children, even the stillborn, for the husband who infused them into that treacherous womb, and even for the mythic Lord who eased Aggie's end by promising her cherubs with pancake makeup on their puffing cheeks to take the places of her children—not to mention of course forgiveness of her awful sins.

I lay on my pillow, seeing her face dying on her dying pillow, not as it really must have looked: clayey and nook-cheeked, puff-eyed, sour-breathed, sweating out her imbecilic immortal soul at the pores. But twenty years ago, smooth-skinned, innocently boyish and square-jawed, fearsomely stupid under her miracle-spinning eyebrows.

I tried to weep, but she was so evil. She was the most evil girl under heaven. She was dumb. Often she smelled of pee, because she was apt to wet herself when her mother hit her with the razor strap or locked her into her room for two days at a time. She cried every passing-time when she did not pass and the others filed proudly, banners blaring, brasses flying, into the next home-room.

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What's Aggie to me or me to she, that I should weep for her? "Come on in," said Aggie's loving ma, "and recite to my guests. Aggie don't have no memory at all, but now *her*, she's *fab*ulous—" indicating me in my lank pig-tails, horrid scarred knees, and scuffed Buster Browns.

With a fierce pride, ignoring the reproach of poor Aggie's ashamed, admiring eyes, I dove with flawless form:

Up from the meadows rich with corn,
Clear in the cool September morn,
The clustered spires of Frederick stand
Green-walled by the hills of Maryland.

Sixty lines complete with dramatic modulations of tone, inspired gestures, and bell-like enunciation. I had had no other teacher than my mother with her beautifully controlled, schoolmarm voice and her untamed, gothic imagination. Aggie, asking nothing from life, congratulated me solemnly:

"Gee, you sure got a fabalus memry, all right . . . ."

Except for Oliver Twist, she had the most wretched childhood I have ever heard of.

"Weep, damn you," I plead into my frozen featherbed, in the guilt-lit hotel room. And *reeeeek* I hear it once more out on the flowering Tyrolean meadows, the light swing on the Gary, Indiana-manufactured hinges, opening to the gentle, firm touch of Mr. Doom with his soft death's eyes, coming to claim me once and for all.

It was Aggie's gate. No, it was mine—it was Mary Melowski's (*Polish*-Catholic) next door!

I am crying now, without effort, without guilt, into my fragrant pillow smelling sweetly of straw, crying for Mary's lessons in wickedness under her back porch, for her brothers' further lessons in the secret hut, for calling and yodeling at front and back doors, for the drunken Mexicans up by the tracks, for running in the ozone-smelling sunshine—a sudden, mindless, breast-bursting sprint toward the train-whistle miles away, for

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the Dirty Dozen with their flies open, for Aggie's idiot countenance—sorrow and doom dimly smeared across it like a double-exposure, for my thirty-four years and the refuse of all our pasts and my own death, for the beautiful, simmering, chocolate eyes of Mr. X.—his sweet smile madly calm—his timid, pale, long girl-fingers insanely sure as he delicately places the green pipe-stem gate in the wooden box and matter-of-factly swings it to.

I first met Mr. Joshua X. the way I met anyone worthwhile or peculiar at all—through my family. I loathed my family, of course, but I was shrewd enough even then (I was twelve) to know that rather than sneak off to Hollywood to be adopted by Jeanette MacDonald, I'd better hang around the house and see the world come by.

It was 1937 and the war hadn't yet jerked us up out of the Depression. My father was still piping home strays—usually Greek, but sometimes Negro or Jewish: anybody with a real or manufactured right to pity. We had a table with food on it, even if it was in the kitchen. We had a rusty iron cot in the basement, but the blankets were still warm in spite of great age, and they bore our proud, mad, double-family crest like a brand, branding with our mixed blood, irrational phobias, and rash hopes anyone who slept under them. *1833* said the red, white, and pink "Lemon Star" quilt: the year Oberlin was founded and my great-great grandmother Otis drove a wagon, all alone, from Barnstable on the Cape to the new one-room farmhouse in north-central Ohio. But the harsh, iron-woven blanket with its queer, lowering, iconic colors and its surface like John the Baptist's hair shirt was dated in stilted, twisted, gothic numerals *1897:* my father's mother, Anastasia Karamoulis, had woven it with thumb-pricks, tears, and hate for her husband to keep himself warm and uncomfortable with in steerage on his way to make a million grass-green dollars in the States. Green fell for the parched, tawny hills of *Griechenland*. (Not that many of his few hundreds ever traveled back home. The barren slope, the empty pot were all that Anastasia got, which is why

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I tend to sneer at that Lawrencian image of the sturdy Peasant Woman: poor and sexually satisfied!) Together, these blankets were enough to endow any two-dimensional stray with all the length, breadth, depth, and momentous history he could use, and by god we were there to see that he didn't shirk. All of us, dead and alive, whooping him on. No chance to let go and die happy!

I offer as proof that in all those years from the crash till the war we had only three cases of theft and one instance of bedbugs.

But Mr. X is no ordinary stray. At first, indeed, he looks like one of many usual types of strays. I see him tread hesitantly in the back door after my father, and because he is sure of his shabbiness and unsure of his welcome he sets the heel of one shoe awkwardly down on the toe of the other. This makes him collapse almost to his knees at the next step, and my cruel, insensitive, unfeeling eight-year-old brother laughs. But Jason has a soul like an armadillo's back, anyhow. I am twelve and have not laughed in six months. It is unlikely that anything will ever be able to make me laugh again. I am setting plates for dinner, and I look gravely across the kitchen into those rich, innocent, madman's eyes, as they wash over me without seeing me at all really, only feeling Watchers, Warm, Food, Place.

"This is Joshua X.," says my father; "he is an artist." Simple declarative, like a royal sentence of death.

At once I am in love. Without transition, conscious memory, or anticipation. But this has happened so often before that unconsciously I am quite used to it. Gently I set his place between my mother's and mine; deliberately I single out the best piece of everyday California Friarware: without chip or crack, an heraldic orange. My mother and I of necessity—by *rights*—get the two unmatched, most nicked plates. I am subtly aware that my little brother is beginning to be on to me, but I would no more think of setting at his place, and in revenge, my chipped

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plate with its brown stains along the cracks than I would of letting him ride my new bicycle.

"How do you do," says my mother's mellifluous, slightly strained voice. She is neither tired nor haughty. Her voice is simply stretching to make a place for him, too. "Will you eat with us?" (As if he'd been dragged in here for any other reason!) "Are you Greek perhaps? If you are, you'll like our lamb stew I'm sure."

She is impossible, I am thinking. Our lamb stew! She's as prissy as a New England preacher (I have met no preachers and only a few priests: Greek Orthodox), and I *hate* those clothes. Years before they become chic on women's campuses she is wearing tight, worn Levis and one of my father's cast-off shirts. She wears this costume to make her other clothes last, and I know this, but its shabby unwomanliness and the ludicrous contrast of the long, gray hair piled in loose coils and old-fashioned silvery puffs on her stately head fill me with distaste. She is a walking anachronism, and I have grown sensitive to the artistic verities. Also, I consider her abused and either too proud or too stupid to fight back—for pretty clothes or fewer free guests.

But most of all I detest the Greek routine. She thinks *any*-thing Greek is peerless though among peers. At least I think she thinks so.

"But I'm not Greek," Mr. X. says helplessly. Like Aladdin, he sees it vanishing—whoosh! the cast-iron kettle of stew, the dinner plates, the whole table fly out the window in a twinkling and skim away, up, up, to take their place with Orion's Belt.

"I'm not either," says my mother comfortingly.

"Never mind!" shouts my father. "You're an artist. You belong to the world!"

He always shouts, indoors or out in the back lot. Parlors or bedrooms or kitchens. I hate it.

"Where will you seat our guest, Daphne?" my mother asks,

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with this habitual loftiness that is not hauteur so much as the result of her persistent romanticism.

At twelve I consider my mother absolutely the creature of her dreams. She must make a ritual even of our simple, monotonous meals! But faced with exposure I feel my stomach curling up to tap startlingly at my palate. I swallow it back down again, and Jason sniggers the dirty snot-eyed pig behind his smelly paw. I am contemplating him being run over by a railroad train, when my mother quite simply puts Joshua X. down beside me, places a napkin between his transparent fingers, ladles stew onto his sunset-colored plate, and tells him not to wait . . .

"We are never *polite* with each other in the family circle." She makes politeness sound like B.O.

Joshua X. did not get to sleep on the iron maiden in the basement. (Oh, honor those harsh spikes, corners, and springs smelling of rust and, deliciously, of moist cement; they've pierced courage into many a poor stumblebum!) Mother put him on the parlor couch, but the next morning she would not allow Jason or me to touch anything in the room until he returned with a pink OK slip from the chest X-ray unit in the neighborhood clinic. Then she carefully made up the couch herself, tenderly folding her ancestors and my father's and laying them away in the coat closet till evening.

"Anyhow, I *won't* have him sleeping in the basement. He is *much* too frail! Daphne, see that he gets fresh bedding every week, like the rest of us."

"How long is he going to stay, Mother?" My love was already blooming in bleeding stigmata on my underdeveloped bosom, but she didn't notice.

"Daphne, we never ask a guest how long he is going to stay." She was embarrassed for me: with the Otis and Karamoulis blood in my veins I should have known better *instinctively* than to breathe the vaguest suggestion of a termination to his visit.

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At the dinnertable, she once said to Jason and me: "Hospitality is the *strongest* of the Greek traditions."

"In Homeric times," roared my father, "we would even send our wives to bed with the guests!" My mother bent over the Brussels sprouts and pursed her lips, but I saw the corners of her mouth twitch.

At one time I had found my father's steady harping on the means and functions of the procreative organs very amusing, indeed. There was an embarrassing family legend that Daphne, aged five, glimpsing her papa making drunken (let us give him the benefit of the doubt) passes at a girl during one of the interminable Karamoulis parties had tripped up to him, crying, "Go to it, Daddy!"

What do you suppose he did then? Coughed, got up, and strode off, looking well over the bridge of his nose—suddenly very much the dignified Mediterranean *paterfamilias?* Probably it cramped his style for the rest of the evening. At any rate, the "bohemian parties," as my mother chose to call them, stopped a few years later. She put an end to them herself, of course. She said, "no more or I walk out." Since no Otis ever uttered a threat without being willing to back it up (the Lord of the Atheists at our right hand), there were no more bohemian parties.

But there continued to be a certain strain, like dangerously stretched rubber-bands, in and around the subject of sex. When I was nine or so my father made some sexual smart crack at which I laughed broadly.

"Mother," I cried, "isn't he funny? Don't you think he's funny, Mother?"

"Daphne," said my mother, "it is my hope that someday you too will grow beyond Rudolph Valentino!"

"Oh Mother," I said, "you're no fun."

My parents belonged to the progressive school of child-rearing, and I was not reproved, but sometime later—I must have been ten or eleven—Mother clarified the subject slightly.

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"Grown-ups, even mothers and fathers, do not always agree about everything."

"When I grow up," said Jason, "I'll always agree with Daphne."

Mother quickly seized his pawn. "When you grow up, I hope, children, that you will no longer kick and scratch like animals—"

"Oh no-o!" We shook our heads. We should live to see the day!

"But you won't *always* agree either. Your father and I don't always agree. . . ."

Jason and I sidled glances. Damn right they didn't!

"But we *resolve* our differences for the sake of the family." Jason was looking puzzled, but Mother bellied on triumphantly down the wind. "Because our family is more important than any one of us, isn't it? Try to remember this, children. . . ."

We nodded solemnly.

"And Daphne, never forget that a woman's first duty—her *privilege*—is to keep her family together."

I sighed. How horrid and prissy it all was!

But of course, in spite of our united family, I found myself making choices. Probably it *wasn't* good to blurt sex-sex-sex all over the place, all the time. I didn't realize that Mother did it, too, that it was the almost ineradicable hallmark of the 'twenties when she and my father had come to maturity and found their gods (Nature, Freedom, Passion).

"You have the most beautiful young *body!*" she would exclaim, gazing rapturously after the bath at my pipe-stem shanks, my almost concave belly, and poor funny little breasts. I could have cried, but because I loved her I forgave her and glozed over these unseemly comments.

I did not forgive my father.

It is Sunday and I have on a new pink rayon blouse. My first that clings. I am standing beside the Victrola, winding it up to play the "Anvil Chorus," my favorite piece of music at

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this time next to "Juanita." I want to play it for Marianne, whom I admire and who, together with her boyfriend, Dr. Digger, is having Sunday dinner with us. I don't admire Dr. Digger one bit and he has just tumbled himself into limbo by drunkenly catching me behind the bathroom door, screwing his satyr's grin up to his eyebrows, ecstatically touching his tongue to the tip of his long nose, and whimpering,

"Oh what cute little boobies! Jus' like inverted tea-cups—makes a fella wanna drink out of 'em, I tell *you!"*

I am disgusted and indignant with the outrage that only an adolescent can muster, but I am also strangely flattered. In addition, my mother is bringing me up to be a lady, and I am damn well going to make it up to Marianne.

At just this moment, as I am leaning down to wind the Victrola, I am sent catapulting against it with a stupendous WHAM! on the back that slams the breath through my lips, and my father strides by, bellowing jovially,

"Stop slumping! Stick 'em out and show us what you've got! It may not be much now, but you'll get more someday. . . ."

Dr. Digger snickers.

I try to smile. I could set a tiger on my father.

I really didn't love my father in those days. I adored him, which meant that I fervently hated him too. But I loved Joshua.

I loved him, insufficient body and puerile soul. I loved him tenderly—and hopelessly, except in raging fantasies when he would rescue me from the brink of Niagara or from a burning hotel and press his clean, hard, all-American lips to mine. He really had a wide, thick-lipped mouth—out of place in that otherwise delicate landscape. His face was square, but the pale skin was stretched so tightly over it that the bones looked ready to tear right through. Indeed, the teeth had already burst it and his lips were the swollen flanks of the wound. I used to fancy that in the night they bled of their own accord.

A horrid notion. My periods had come on almost two years before, and though I was used to them I was much taken up with

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thoughts of bleeding. Was sap tree-blood? (I knew better.) Was fish-blood warm or cold? Did bleeding begin *right* under the skin, or how far down did you have to go? I would take these problems to my mother, and when she couldn't answer she would shoo me on to my father.

I took neither of them the night and the prayers. The long, unsteady nights without sleep—several times I lay dizzily awake till breakfast, my ears growing funnels, my heart plopping, my lips in mounds. What was the matter? At times I couldn't imagine. At others I knew at once, with implacable self-judgment, absolute horror:

"Oh God, forgive me for doing dirty things at night and with Mary and Steven and Junior when I was six and eight years old but that was a long time ago and they taught me. Oh gran'ma *please* . . ."

This last was addressed to Grandma Otis whose Christian Science martyrdom I trusted to get me in right again with God. (She had died of cancer of the stomach, refusing to see a doctor —"I'm perfectly well in Science, dear." . . . . "B'lieve I'll just stick to my Spirit, thank you! And don't you forget, Daphne, we wouldn't have a speck of pain if t'weren't for Mortal Mind." But oh what horror at the end, the mindless maggots of the eyes crawling in the sockets, the pretty old lady mouth screaming for *aspirin* to ease the pain.)

There was no help to be had by invoking my immediate family: they didn't believe in God. Even Jason would declare self-righteously, if asked by an unwary neighbor: "I'm an atheist, like my whole family."

Whereas these days I hedged. "Well, I was *bap*tized Greek Orthodox . . ." And when hard-pressed: "I don't really think we ought to discuss religion; it's more private, like politics, don't you think?"

Then at night, heavily weighted down with my lippy passion for Joshua X., I would plead God's pardon for evading Him. But what were these slender filaments of lips that drove

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me crazy morning to night and to morning again? Why *there?* I knew—I knew, well enough, without knowing. My parents singly and together (with Jason lately wise-guying it behind the door) had explained to me the whole process of sexual love (oh, the 'twenties), mating (oh, the 'thirties), and having babies blah blah blah! I persisted in imagining that babies emerged from the rectum, though when asked directly (as I often was by mates—like poor Aggie—with less progressive parents) I would reply dutifully that of course they came out of your you-know-what, whatja think goofy cross-eyes? Huh, goofy?

Aggie said she didn't think so. Why not? "Our Sister in Cath'lic school says babies come from Heaven."

Aggie, did they come from Heaven when your man stuck them in you and they ripped out again, swollen with life—even that putrid stillborn—leaving placentas and blood and cancer behind them? In you? In your torn, bleeding, pulpous, lippy box?

At night, in foreign quaint-garden Tyrol, I know no better. I have such a horror of what can be put in boxes: children and dead people and cancer and garden gates and palpable, breathing, passionate fantasies.

Joshua was an artist. A story so monotonous as hardly to bear notation. He was on WPA but he had caught pneumonia and WPA could not pay his bills. He needed to live free somewhere for a brief time to save a little money. He lived with us for four months while my mother built up his health and morale and my father helped him find a steady job that left him enough time and energy to make his "objects."

They weren't paintings and they weren't sculptures and at the time and for years afterward (though I never admitted it to anyone but myself) they seemed very queer even to me. Now I know that he was a kind of Surrealist and that he was doing really very original work, though Giacommetti had made related objects a few years before—and Cornell was doing so then but

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quite without knowledge of Joshua's work. No one came to know Joshua's work.

Usually he used shoe-boxes without lids, or he would cut holes or little doors in the lids or sides and sheet them with cellophane so you could peek through. This was in the beginning. When he began earning a few dollars he bought scraps of lumber and hammered together boxes which he fitted with glass tops.

"What's *that?*"

"A platypus."

"What?"

"A clong. A schnoo. A fllmnp. — Daphne!"

It is impossible to *describe* a work of art (which is what these were) without driving out of it that very quality of unexpected, perfect resolution which makes it art. I said these boxes were queer, and they were, but in spite of my adolescent fears, shames, and proprieties I rather liked them. They reminded me of the doll-house I had played with till I was ten and was ashamed (but yearned) to play with now that I approached, queenly, the years of high school.

In the boxes and in precise, painstakingly considered juxtaposition he placed all manners of madnesses: coils of thin wire and snippets of hair (one of my shorn curls went into a box labeled "Little Side-Dream": I was delighted by the curl but obscurely hurt by the title), fragments of newspaper photographs and print, toothbrush bristles and fingernail parings and empty lipstick cases, shreds of cloth and bits of broken glass or china, pebbles, the insides of watches, pencil stubs, even one of Jason's molars. My mother got to saving all the non-decayable refuse of each day for him to pick over at night.

"I don't like them or understand them," she said, "but he has the *right,* I believe." She could be very romantic about her principles.

At night Jason and I would hurtle down to the basement to watch him work till bedtime. He never complained at our presence though he talked very little while he worked. We jab-

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bered incessantly, boomed and yakked the radio, and even tinkered with his tools and tiny toys. Occasionally Joshua would frown us away from something, and once he said to me,

"Daphne, if you were my little girl I would slam you one on your behind," which made me rush upstairs to my room weeping with humiliation and disappointment. *Little girl,* indeed! when he was the forbidden fruit of my fantasies. I wouldn't blossom forth (Elaine, the lily maid of Astalot) until he came to murmur through my keyhole, "Come on out, sweetheart; I'll make you a special box all your own. OK?"

He made us—each member of the family—several boxes, which have been flooded out or burned or lost in the way of most flotsam. I see now that his boxes were more than cute three-dimensional collages or elaborate toys. They were often playful but just as often wistful or downright sad. There was frequently a narrative or descriptive element to them, but neither simple nor temporal: they didn't tell stories like a picturebook.

"Little Side-Dream" was a wooden box almost a foot square. Under the sliding glass lid with its delicately beveled edges lay a whole nest of old-fashioned watches, perhaps a dozen, each telling a different time. He had bought them (all broken) in a lot at a rummage sale. When you slid out the glass and lifted the watch-faces you found beneath each, instead of the works, a special scene or object: a used railway ticket; a ship tumbling over the waves; a tiny effulgent city, the neon lights drops of colored enamel; a sidereal landscape; a sleeping maiden; the silky parabola of my curl. Like all his boxes, it revealed in a flash a whole fantasy or fragment of experience.

In short, it was art. If it were to be resurrected today I suppose the museums, ravenous as ever, would stick it in an Extinguished Talent or Old Americans show and then, frail creation, it'd be taken up and touted about by the best fairy gallery in New York. *Requiescat in pace.*

My friend, my secret pet, my slight gentle idol, ignorant companion of my midnight, pre-breakfast and, frequently, surrep-

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titious naptime revels was no fairy himself, however. At first he simply seemed to pull a blank around women. Maybe he was just too tired or discouraged. Maybe he wanted to work more than to chase girls. This disturbed my father. He had not the usual over-aggressive male's fear of homosexuals; quite the opposite, in fact. He relegated to them a position as honorable as that of women, only less fortunate.

"There are three species of sexual humans in the world." He hammers his fist on the dinnertable for silence, and the knives and forks skip at our places.

"First (with a broad wink toward my mother), the least important: women who sleep with Men. Next, fairies who sleep with each other or with Men; and finally, Men who sleep preferably with women, but with fairies if there aren't any women around or if they need a free meal or a little extra cash. These—"

He stops for an instant to swallow: during his harangue he has been cramming food into his mouth with the same breathless insatiability with which he talks.

"—are called the *bulls* (*bools*); homosexuals and women we call the *cows*."

Mother is furious. She hacks her food in bits and snaps it off the fork.

Chin arched intellectually—I have recently discovered *Well of Loneliness* wedged in at the end of one of our bookshelves—I inquire where he would place Lesbians in his scale. It is one of the compensations for our peculiar childhood that he almost always considers Jason's and my questions seriously. He stops chewing, thoughtfully clears his sinuses, and replies:

"Upon reflection I can recall only two important Lesbians: Sappho and Queen Elizabeth. And though I have none of the usual prejudices—in fact, I was once in puppy-love (*poppylahve*) with a beautiful Lesbian girl named Rosemary—how is it possible to count a movement(!) which in approximately five thousand years of recorded history has produced only two significant examples? Whereas from Plato to Gide there have ex-

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isted thousands of important fairies, only here I will distinguish further between fairies and pederasts. . . ."

At this point even I, really interested only in sex these days —even I weary and cease to listen while I toy with Joshua's empty coffee-cup at my elbow.

After a quick, seemingly casual inspection my father decided that Joshua (certainly no fairy, and probably not even a pederast) needed nothing so tonic-y as a woman, and accordingly he began to bring them in. It gave him a good excuse to gather pretty girls around him, and my mother, after a grim sigh, pitched in to help with extra meals and occasional parties, though she "would have nothing wild" she stated, darting a menacing glance at my father.

"*Puritana!*" muttered my father, but he stopped hanging out his tongue all the same.

At first they came and went in swift succession, frail blossoms on the gusts of our prince's bored sighs. Grace, who helped with dishes, and Viola who did not and smeared "I really love Jason best" all over the bathroom mirror with Tangee lipstick. Pretty Nanette with whom I fell briefly in love and to whom we gaily sang all one evening, "*No, no Nanette! No, no.*" Jean—from a dull Iowa family—who had joined the social revolution and tried earnestly to convert Joshua to socially significant art. Sarah who was Jewish and was really having a hell of a time trying to organize the lady garment workers in her district. He liked her best for a while, but, I heard him tell my father, he just didn't feel like sleeping with her.

"Why *not?*" roared my father.

"Why?" queried Joshua, and there Sarah rested.

Then my father started to round up the Greek girls. Had I thought, had I been strong and brave and used to offering advice to my father, I would simply have warned him, "*Don't!*" I understood this instinctively, for I had no truck with Greek girls myself, but in those days I didn't know how to examine an intuitive reaction for its validity as a genuine mode of con-

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scious behavior. I was still all instinct and feeling, rushing about with my eyes tight shut and my mouth wide open—panting, greedily swallowing. By the time (very soon) I knew enough to take rational action, I didn't want to act. I wanted calamity. I hated Joshua. I stood like a fence-post and let it come down.

Joshua did not nibble at the first two or three "Greek girls" either, and my father grew really worried. But I had seen a spark light up, far back in those sweet wild eyes of his, at the very suggestion of Greekness and *I* was worried. With my customary self-condemnation (Daphne, you mean skinny witch, you!), I attributed this to simple female jealousy, and I tried to scour it out of my heart. *I* couldn't have Joshua (I still had to go to high school and college and become famous and besides, I was just his "little side-dream," wasn't I?) but that didn't mean some Woman (grown up and with breasts) couldn't gobble him up, marry him down, discharge him with babies, and make him blissful or at least quiet in the accepted manner.

It never once occurred to me—till a little later, of course—that I might be seismographically recording a very faint tremor in Joshua's crust which, intensified, could split his delicate world wide open.

That first tremor was in his eyes, but it was not, really. It was in "Little Side-Dream." Stupid Daphne!

The girl's name was *Vasiliki* (broad "a," accent on the last syllable). It is the feminine form of Basil: in Greek most of us are merely afterthoughts of the male, as it were: female appendages, like an extra set of nipples, on the male name. It means "little queen."

She was. She was small and she carried herself as if she expected to have both her hands kissed. This in a seventeen-year-old movie cashier is no minor attainment. Perhaps she was merely modeling herself after Norma Shearer or Bette Davis, but within the boundaries of her very limited world she succeeded. Her hands were kissed and fondled. She received orchids for dances at a time when few young men could afford to send orchids. She

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was sent presents and she took them, except for clothing. Here of course she was already approaching the dangerous no-man's land of the Greek community where no unmarried girl, not even a little queen with a diadem between her thighs, dares to walk abroad. She had been engaged twice and had kept the diamonds and the wrist-watches, for which it was already whispered that she was a *poutana* by a very few old hens. But this whisper got no breeze to travel on. Vasiliki carried about in her patent leather handbag a clear image of herself, to maintain which she was willing to make considerable sacrifices.

She gave the plainest wristwatch to her favorite girl cousin who *needed* it, she pouted to her mother, father, aunts, uncles, and girlfriends. She had the diamond prized out of one ring and set in a gold, heart-shaped locket in which she actually wore the beefy, bewildered countenances of mama and papa. The other ring she gave with a certain amount of ladylike publicity to St. Dimitrios during a fund-raising drive. She was even included in a group photograph of church "donors" in the *Greek Daily*. By the time Joshua came along she was forging a pretty coat-of-arms in the Greek community for a mere cook's daughter.

I see now that she used Joshua to get to us because she really believed she needed us for the construction of her private palace. I'm not contriving excuses for her; she was wrong from the moment she took it into her shiny, black-helmeted head that it was a shameful thing to be the issue of a poor restaurant cook. But oh Vasiliki, queen-bee, grubby infant of a fat, sweaty Macedonian hick who always smelled of other people's food, snorkled in his soup and wiped the grease off on the back of his hand—target for the slings and arrows of portly, be-taffeted, real gold-ed Daughters of Hera with their "teas" and their "luncheons" and their squealing Demotic "minutes" and their infernal money-raising—you with your purse-mouthed pursuit of a cell padded in real Brussels lace and imported Spanish shawls with a grand piano in the middle to play the latest Greek tangoes on (they were still tangoing in Athens in 1937)—miscarriage of your

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environment, lost crown-jewel of Byzantium set in village mud, lemon-blossom with your soul like the withered lemon rind—let me not judge you.

My father was a lawyer and for all his mixed marriage, free talk, and derision of the church, he was a great prince in this tiny principality in the marches. I could afford to be scornful of Greek girls and go my way: I had an American mother, American girlfriends, and an American college waiting for me. My mother had graduated from the same college in 1918—my grandfather in 1892—my great-grandmother in 1860. I was a free agent.

Vasiliki was not. She lived in a box; her soul wasn't big enough to break out, so she felt she had to see that her box got furnished right.

Joshua did not appear to nibble the first time. He sat far back on the couch that was his night-time bed, with his thin legs awkwardly crossed like a boy just beginning to wear long trousers and his skinny, supple hands jammed in his pockets. Maybe he was running. Interior flight. He said little except, challengingly, that he read *PM,* voted for Roosevelt (this was no challenge, everyone Vasiliki knew voted for Roosevelt), and believed that art could best serve the social revolution by following its own organic growth in joyous freedom (hear hear!).

Vasiliki was only seventeen but she was no fool; she was a good Greek girl. She ignored him gently except for an occasional sweet, plump glance full of sisterly laughter and spent her time talking to Mother and me. She was demure with my father. Though she allowed herself, at the end of the evening, to be pinched on the behind, she quickly spatted his hand, sped to my mother, kissed her on both cheeks, slipped her arm around my waist and gave me a hug, and drew that imp Jason to her bosom with real affection.

She had a beautiful bosom. I loved it. It was high and full without being distorted like those on the calendar Petty Girls Jason was already collecting. On her second visit, a few nights

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later, she wore a soft white lace collar folded in a deep V across her breasts—a fichu really. There were a number of uniquely old-fashioned touches about her: she bought long earrings in the dime-store and wore them with her black hair, which had never been cut, spiraling in a sombre crown round and round the summit of her perfect little head.

What my father had failed to take into account with Viola and Sarah and even Nanette was that an artist usually demands both genuine and unusual beauty in his woman. Not just any pretty girl. But a *different, beautiful* girl. When Vasiliki bent over Joshua to offer him a snowy box of *loukoum* and a glass of *mustikah* and her pretty breasts belled downward in her Betsy Ross bodice and her obsidian coronet tilted toward him, like gleaming, curved blades—*then* I saw him leap toward life. His hands and feet jerked, and his face lit like a Roman candle: eyes, lips, teeth, taut incandescent skin. My father saw it, too, and purred deep in his throat like a big cat—rumble of vicarious pleasure in all that fragrant female flesh. Then he sighed and drew his brows together, probably at his own denial.

But I was lost in the second act. What divine revelation was taking place in our makeshift crèche? Such pain, such pleasure! Like my father's really—pleasure in the sudden stimulus to the senses which the spectacle of those two offered us, pain in knowing that I was only in the audience.

Once Jason, who knew a Trojan horse when he saw one, said, "What's he so crazy about that glamorpuss for?"

"Oh, he thinks it's so la-dee-da, being Greek," I sneered.

Years later—only a matter of weeks ago—I saw Joshua's face again as it was at that moment. I was standing in the Uffizi before the central panel of the Portinari Altarpiece: the "Adoration of the Shepherds." And there he is. The third peasant, racing in on the tides of his need, his shepherd's crook clasped to his breast like a crucifix, like the hand of his beloved—his crazy northern face lit and wild with recognition as he stares at the Virgin. Diamond of Judah! Full, bursted melon of the House of

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David, spilling the secret of all creation from the cornucopia of your womb! Van der Goes, they say, ended his days as a monk in a madhouse—oh mad in that monkeyhouse—of course I stand and stand to stare and muse, why do I love it? where does it hurt so? whom have I seen him become before? It isn't till now, jerking suddenly up on my mattress of geraniums and cuckoo-clocks that I remember and am ashamed for the cruel, casual, protective loss of memory that denies us our intensest experiences so that we can go on living.

There was already some slight, subtle footwork between my mother and me on the subject of the boxes.

My father only said, "What th'hell! Let her take him as he is. She's only a woman, isn't she? Good brood mare!"

But we knew better. Their third meeting was a date, so there wasn't any danger then. He took her to see *The Garden of Allah,* and I suppose Vasiliki thenceforward incorporated Dietrich into her rogue's gallery for the composite model: the ironic queen never really possessed, even in the final close-up caress. Joshua came home, contemplated the autographed still of Charles Boyer I had tacked over my own fretted couch, and said cryptically,

"Wait and see."

Then he said, "If you like, Vasiliki will get you all the photos of stars you want. For free. From the movie where she works."

Greedy little beast Daphne! It was clear what she was up to, but I grabbed at my bribe with delight. Pride and personal autographs to the winds! What I hungered for were pieces of Hollywood dream-cake to nibble on. I was only twelve and I didn't hesitate for an instant to toss away the ruby so I could take the glass chip to dream on.

There followed in quick succession a book for my mother, a toy watch for Jason (she favored watches), and two packs of the best Turkish cigarettes for my father. Vasiliki had almost no extra spending money so she had to buy shrewdly, and she

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bought with taste. The volume for my mother was a stroke of genius: the *complete* poems of Browning. Enormous. Later I learned that she had paid a special visit to her old English teacher in high school simply to ask her what one gave an American lady who had been to college and liked to read. Of course her teacher said Browning (amazing that it wasn't "Bobby" Burns); even so, Vasiliki had the fine good sense not to buy a "collected verse." A delicate point maybe, but she went up fast in my mother's estimation after that.

Really, though, that was so Greek of her—the desire to impress by amassing *all* the riches. While of course my mother mistakenly concluded that Vasiliki had read and liked Browning and had the true poetry lover's distrust of an anthology, "which—Daphne—depends on some *other* reader's taste."

Not much later I became Vasiliki's confidante, and I never betrayed her, till now when all the marbled batter of venom and love pushes up in me like something rising too fast in the oven. I despised her sly maneuvers, but I loved her. Because Joshua wanted her, because she was beautiful, because I longed to *be* her, because with all my mother's brains and education she had never developed such a skill in stratagem to teach to me so I could become a woman like other women.

At their fourth meeting, in spite of all mother's and my delaying tactics, Joshua took Vasiliki down into the dank basement to see his boxes. Mother was a romantic and wanted their idyll to continue a little longer. I was afraid of what might happen to Joshua. Nervously, we traipsed downstairs together after them, peering ahead to see what was going on under the electric light bulb.

"How-do-you-like-them-aren't-they-marvelously-clever?" Mother cried all in one breath.

"Oh yes, they're so cute," said Vasiliki in her pretty, very very faintly accented syllables. "I like *that* one," pointing at random.

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Robert Brustein

THE MADISON AVENUE VILLAIN

Throughout the history of American dissent—in order that the complex problems of a large and multifarious society may be more simply apprehended—political, social, and economic conflicts have been given the shape of an allegory, usually inaugurated on a stage of national grievance by a malevolent Mr. Badman from the East. In the past, dissident groups like the Jacksonians, Silverites, Populists, and Marxists generally identified this allegorical Vice as the grasping Wall Street financier who coldly victimized a wide-eyed American Everyman; but recent critics, while preserving the same hero, have changed the nature of the allegory by substituting a new villain. Today, Mr. Badman has softer features, a more subtle profession, and more centrally located New York headquarters: the Wall Street villain has yielded the stage to the villain from Madison Avenue. The old allegory, despite its simplistic character structure and hysterical climaxes, was a crude but viable dramatization of the economic motivation behind American social evils; the new one, though more sophisticated in approach, merely muddies the issues, weakens the power of dissent, and deflects attention from the true source of current abuses. Beginning with a comparison of the two allegorical villains, I intend to analyze the origins of the new allegory in order to show how it fosters and encourages serious evasions among certain groups of American spokesmen.

The Wall Street villain is today totally obsolete, surviving as an ominous *persona* only in the Communist press, but he was

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once a crucial figure in American plays, novels, movies, manifestoes, and newspapers of radical persuasion. There he was almost invariably characterized as a monster of greed and avarice, for, while originally inspired by such magnates as Morgan, Carnegie, and Rockefeller, he soon became less a portrait of a living person than a Marxist-Socialist symbol of capitalist abuse. Everyone over thirty can remember that porcine Banker, Oil Magnate, or War Profiteer who used to hover hungrily over exploited millions in his top hat and cutaway coat, his fat lips curled around a long black cigar, his chubby fingers groping money bags, his cruel eyes reflecting dollar signs. This was the Robber Baron of popular cartoons, the personification of the sweat shop, the trust, and the shady deal—self-made, vulgar, domineering, his empire constructed atop the prostrate bodies of the poor.

The Wall Street villain quietly expired as a national scapegoat some time during World War II, leaving the Madison Avenue villain as his only heir. But while the latter is now accused of practices just as shadowy as the Robber Baron's, he is a figure of much greater depth and complexity, and comes equipped with a personal life of substantial pathos. The reasons for this can be found in his origins: the Madison Avenue villain was first created not by angry radicals to symbolize economic abuse but by unimpassioned social scientists as an image of social-psychological behavior. Thus, the Madison Avenue villain is an evolutionary figure (still in the process of evolving) who starts out, quite harmlessly, as an object of sociological study, and who retains many of these earlier characteristics to the present day. In this guise, he is clearly no match for his fearful predecessor. His individual powers, for example, are not very strong, for he is less a business executive than an account executive, less a self-made man than a man without a self. Rather than being marked by physical blemishes, he is natty to the point of narcissism—sleek and feline in his Ivy League suit, Brooks Brothers shirt, and Oppenheimer haircut. And as for his education, instead of being unread, he might almost be called an intellectual *manqué*

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—the college-bred son of wealthy parents who begins his career, perhaps, with ambitions towards the *Kenyon Review* before settling down in the "creative department" of Kenyon and Eckhardt.

Seen through the neutralizing haze of the social sciences, in other words, he may not be an attractive figure, but he is hardly a threatening ogre like his Wall Street counterpart. Rather, he seems the confused victim of the complexities of modern life, and it is in this role that he first comes to public attention in dozens of best-selling works of popular and high sociology. Through these, it has been revealed how intensely he depends on the opinions of others, how desperately he seeks security and a sense of belonging, how anxiously he desires a "home" with his firm. Mountains of statistics record the incidence of his weekly sexual activity, the average price of his ranch house, the mean number of his TV sets, automobiles, and freezers, the rate of delinquency in his child-centered suburb, and the extent of his debts when his salary is $40,000 a year. Tons of descriptive material identify him as a Status Seeker, an Organization Man, an Exurbanite, an Expense Account Aristocrat, a Waist High Culturist, a citizen in the Genial Society, and a member of The Lonely Crowd, for he has been so carefully analyzed that there is hardly a private corner of his life left to be examined.

This detached exploration of his anxious personality, however, is now being accompanied by a scorching critique of his professional activities where he is held accountable not as a social victim but as a cultural victimizer. In the press, in the pulpit, in publishing, and on political platforms, the Madison Avenue villain is frequently identified, at least in his *function,* as the Machiavelli of modern life. Since his Machiavellian activities have been so well rehearsed over the past few years, they require little elaboration here. I shall only suggest the bare outlines of the mystique which the mere phrase *Madison Avenue* is now sufficient to invoke: the manipulation of consumer and voter opinion by commercial repetition; the false, misleading,

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and fatuous quality of modern advertising; the invidious control by the ad and talent agencies over the mass media; the vacuity and violence pervasive in TV; the slavish deference of networks and advertisers to rating reports; and the general defeat of truth and spontaneity by blandness and uniformity. Every day, in fact, a new charge is added to a burgeoning list of indictments —the latest by Newton Minow, chairman of the F.C.C., who stigmatizes the networks and the agencies for their baleful influence on the young. In short, the various institutions lining Madison Avenue have finally become the targets for frustrations and resentments which, in other forms, were once aimed at Wall Street. Or, put into the language of allegory: the Madison Avenue villain today holds the American Everyman as tightly in his sweaty palm as the Wall Street villain once held him in his powerful fist, only now the methods of control are considered even more crafty, cunning, and subliminal.

There is one significant alteration in the substance of the new allegory: it now has hardly any politico-economic resonance at all. The Wall Street villain—whose critics were attacking the nature of free enterprise itself—was considered the incarnation of a flawed system which permitted men to exploit America's resources for their own profit. The Madison Avenue villain, on the other hand, embodies no reflections on the system; his chicanery is thought to be mainly psychological and cultural, consisting in the manipulation of corruption of men's minds for sinister, and often unnamed, motives. The switch from the politico-economic to the cultural-psychological emphasis is partially dictated by the nature of the new problem. It is not the evils of unequal wealth but rather the evils of the mass media which are now thought to be among our most serious domestic afflictions. Despite the special nature of this new evil, however, it would seem perfectly logical to suspect an economic basis for it, especially when the media representatives refer so frequently to the demands of their sponsors. Yet, most critics have been reluctant to concede such motives, preferring—like Newton

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Minow[1]—to assign the blame for media deterioration to cynical broadcasters who persistently undervalue the level of public taste. In short, public disapprobation lights on the person of the Madison Avenue villain; and thus, instead of urging political reform, critics of the media recommend palliatives for the "improvement" of the mass arts—apparently satisfied that if the Madison Avenue villain would only mend his ways, the major abuses of the media would somehow magically disappear. It is more likely that the media would collapse altogether, since they are based on these abuses. But before elaborating this point, let me demonstrate why I find the new allegory so inadequate as an explanation of the sources of these problems and so useless as a path to a solution.

First of all, it should be obvious that the Madison Avenue villain, whatever his importance to the prosperity of our economy, is simply not equal to his assigned role. One has only to glance at the work he actually performs to see that his allegorical significance has been over-inflated. Prototypically, of course, the Madison Avenue villain is an adman—but he also works in a variety of positions created by advertising and the media over the past twenty years. To mention but a few of these, he can be an editor or publisher of mass circulation books and magazines, a book club organizer, a network executive, a producer or packager of TV shows, a network continuity man, a quiz contestant, a casting director, a story editor, a script editor, a market researcher, a motivation expert, a public relations man, an agency representative, and a press or actor's agent. None of these jobs is essential to anyone's health, balance, or sense of fulfillment. But if the Wall Street villain was always an exploiter, the worst thing to be said about the Madison Avenue villain is that he is unnecessary, for he markets something that he has

1. "I do not accept the idea that the present over-all programming is aimed accurately at the public taste. . . . A rating, at best, is an indication of how many people saw what you gave them." Speech before the National Association of Broadcasters, May 9, 1961.

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not made and that people do not need. The greedy financier could be stigmatized for his accumulation of wealth in a time of poverty and want, but the Man in the Grey Flannel Suit is only a superfluous man in a culture of abundance—a *Mittelmensch* in his function, taste, and class.

It is this mediocre quality that makes it so inappropriate to identify him with a radical evil—he almost always works in a subordinate capacity. The Wall Street villain was the undisputed boss of a large business empire, solely responsible for decisions which he alone could make. But the Madison Avenue villain, no matter how exalted his title, is only a salesman—which probably accounts for his anxious and over-affable manner. One may wonder how such a cipher came to be the personification of Madison Avenue treachery; yet, there is really nobody else to blame. The Madison Avenue organization seems to have no boss—no Ford or Gould or Vanderbilt to invest the firm with a strong human identity. Run by hordes of faceless, trembling vice-presidents, the typical agency or network has the quality of an anonymous oligarchy. Policies seem to develop almost organically, rather than being initiated by individuals, and in place of decisions, changes are made through "expressions of feeling." This notorious lack of individual responsibility in policy making[2] can no doubt be explained by the complicated corporate structure of modern organizations, but it is more likely explained by the fact that the Madison Avenue organization has no real autonomy. For if the Madison Avenue villain is only an agent or a salesman, in this he typifies his entire firm. Both the communications and advertising industries are basically sales organizations—client's middlemen whose major func-

2. Demonstrated by the agility with which Madison Avenue can pass the buck. After Minow's "wasteland" speech, for example, the ad agencies expressed, in private, their resentment that the F.C.C. chairman was meddling in areas that concerned only the advertisers, their agencies, and the networks. But in public, they praised the speech for "touching all the bases" and being "right on target"—and promptly blamed everything on the networks.

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tion is to market goods in the most profitable manner possible. To criticize the techniques of Madison Avenue is, therefore, only to badger the salesman for policies approved by the company and necessary to its survival. Yet, even some of the most severe indictments of the mass media stop short of this simple perception, choosing to probe a rotten branch of the tree without examining its cankered roots. To account for the obtuseness of these critics, one must understand the conditions under which the new allegory found its form.

The demise of the Wall Street villain is easy enough to understand. It is difficult to work up much indignation against a symbol of corpulent and inequitable wealth when multitudes of obese Americans now spend their leisure clipping coupons. Prosperity, full employment, and social insurance had eradicated conspicuous poverty; the old tycoons and their sons had softened their unpleasant image by becoming statesmen and foundation-philanthropists; the autocracy of family empire had been replaced by the pseudo-democracy of big profit-sharing corporations, making every stockholder a self-interested defender of capitalism; and trade unionism had triumphed, developing its own forms of gangsterism and exploitation.

The founders of the old allegory, the radical intellectuals, had changed also. By the time the Cold War and Stalinist Russia fixed the nation's attention on an enemy beyond its walls rather than on its own domestic problems, the most influential dissenters had already abandoned Marxism. Socialism was losing most of its frustrated supporters. And when McCarthyism made any criticism of the American system a trifle dangerous, all organized radical activity appeared abruptly to cease. Anxious to dissociate themselves from a discredited or ineffectual political position, many of these old radicals turned rigid and defensive —"frozen," according to William Barrett, "into some publicly correct attitude of anti-communism whose political content was allowed to degenerate into variations on the chant that communism was bad." Thus, the energies of ex-radicals were now

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poured into defending the system, rather than changing it; and, in the 'fifties, the eagerness of some to find a substitute affirmation even resulted in an enthusiastic embrace of "Our Country and Our Culture" (as a prophetic *Partisan Review* symposium was called), which consisted of repudiating the old attitudes of dissent in favor of a more positive attitude towards American middle-class values.

In line with this, many intellectuals became interested in American popular culture, initiating cautious investigations into the significance of movies, TV, comic strips, Broadway, Tin Pan Alley, and the mass magazines. Except for a small group which attacked these expressions for their malign effect on the brains and nerves of the American people, observers were generally quite sanguine in their conclusions, and some even professed to find optimistic signs of intelligence and maturity in the mass media (the jukebox, for example, was hailed by one as an important twentieth-century innovation). But even when it ignored popular culture, intellectual activity seemed heavily influenced by the methods of the social sciences. Investigation became cool, objective, statistical. Analyses were qualified, moderate, and restrained. Conclusions were brimming with complications. The "end of ideology" was rather prematurely celebrated. Freudian and Neo-Freudian insights became the vogue, and Riesman and Kinsey replaced Marx and Trotsky as the most influential writers of the period.

In short, where the tone of intellectuals was once primarily political and indignant, it soon became sociological, psychological, and complacent; where critics were once concerned over economic self-interest, they soon became involved with mass communications; where attention once focused on the Robber Baron and social injustice, it soon centered on the Organization Man and social behavior. As a result, the intellectuals, once alienated from society, were now being absorbed into it, a process of assimilation said to reflect their new sense of purpose, responsibility, and maturity. And American society, grateful for

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relief from these gadflies, was quick to provide its rewards: the media began to beckon invitingly; the mass magazines became more hospitable to highbrow writers; psychologists, sociologists, and economists by the hundreds left the university to take up lucrative "advisory" positions with industry and research organizations; and the Democratic party even ran an egghead candidate twice. In this benevolent climate, liberal consensus completely triumphed over radical non-conformity, and the old allegory went up in smoke. The epitaph of the 'fifties might have been the First Player's smug reply to Hamlet: "We have reformed that indifferently with us."

It was during these transitional years that the personality of the Madison Avenue villain was most rigorously explored, the bland personification of a period of cultural narcissism during which America stopped to examine its image in a statistical looking glass. This period of cultural normalcy—so similar to the years presided over by President Harding—lasted through the doldrums of the Eisenhower administration, but even towards the end of that dreary interregnum one could sense that normalcy was coming to an end. A series of scandalous exposures, chief among them the TV scandals, began to usher out the era with a chorus of raspberries. As a result of these scandals, a limited form of muckraking came back into fashion, focusing attention mainly on the villainies of Madison Avenue. The nation's uneasiness over Madison Avenue techniques had already been exposed after the subliminal advertising scare. Now it was exacerbated by revelations that the mass media were rigged: quiz shows were fixed, commercials were fraudulent, TV incomes were supplemented by gifts, plugs, and bribes, and the F.C.C.—designed to regulate the industry—was itself hamstrung by corrupt officials and the political power of the networks. The Teapot Dome affair had called attention to illegal business practices; the media revelations, though unimportant in themselves, fixed our eyes on the corruption of our communications.

But although these scandals suggested that the pickings in

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communications were just as big as those in oil, munitions, or government contracts, they provoked little criticism of the profit system which had caused them—partly because the voice of radicalism had been muted, partly because many critics were now involved in this system themselves and feared endangering their interests, but mainly because the corruption in the media was never traced to its source. Congressional committees are notoriously reluctant to push their investigations too far, but the House unit investigating the quiz scandals was even more reticent than usual. After throwing Charles Van Doren and a few TV producers to a public hungry for scapegoats, it closed up its investigations as quickly as a surgeon sews up the body of a patient when his exploratory reveals cancer in the entire system—and turned to more harmless matters like disc jockey payola. As a result of the little that was revealed, only the contestants suffered any real damage (they are still being mercilessly hounded in the courts), though the networks and agencies, despite their readiness to betray their employees,[3] could not escape without tarnished reputations. As for the sponsors—who had profited the most and who undoubtedly controlled the fix—they remained completely unscathed. Left to stew over perjured TV idols and dishonest organization men, the public satisfied itself with blaming the whole affair on "Madison Avenue" whose policies, nevertheless, remained substantially unchanged.

The case against the Madison Avenue villain was further strengthened by other developments: former ad-men began to produce best-selling *mea culpas,* promising sensational disclosures about waste-making and hidden persuasion; the Ford Foundation issued a report publicizing the stringent censorial powers

3. It is now a fixed practice to let the organization men take the rap for the actions of the company (*cf.* the recent electrical equipment scandals). When the heat is off, however, the employees generally return to the company, quite often in their old positions. Many of the quiz show producers, for example, are now back in television—some of them again producing quiz shows.

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exercised by the agencies over writers for the media; and educators, TV reviewers, editorialists, and politicians discovered in Madison Avenue a convenient lapel on which to pin juvenile delinquency, public immorality, manipulated elections, mass conformity, national illiteracy, planned obsolescence, and the unfortunate image America enjoys abroad. Most of these charges contained germs of truth as far as they went, but not one of them took into account the vassalage of Madison Avenue to the American business economy. It was now bad taste to mention the profit motive. Instead of demanding to know how our communications had fallen into the hands of business, critics were content to dramatize a gratuitous conspiracy perpetrated against the public by dark-intentioned hucksters.

This situation of a year ago remains unchanged today—if anything, it has been intensified by the election of the Kennedy administration with its promise (until the air leaked out of the tire) of a Galbraithian neo-radicalism. The Madison Avenue allegory now has strong support in official government circles, mostly among consensus liberals with middle-brow tastes, but it is precisely there, against the background of political power, that its inadequacy as an explanation of our cultural deterioration is most depressingly revealed. For if the responsibility for the condition of the media rests only on the agencies, the producers, and the broadcasters, why have they not reformed in the face of mounting criticism of their actions? If the manipulators of TV are merely lazy or stupid or cynical men who misjudge public taste, why do they always fail to obtain sponsors and audiences for works of art, educational programs, and public affairs offerings? Why has Mr. Minow been unable to achieve even minor changes in the structure of the F.C.C.? And why have congressmen of both parties refused to support his reforms? The answers to these questions suggest that the problems of the media have not been sufficiently analyzed, and that the pressure groups blocking a solution are a much more formidable lobby than an anxious coterie of Madison Avenue organization men.

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One suspects that the entire free enterprise system is lobbying against reform. For not only are the abuses of the media absolutely essential to their survival as commercial enterprises, but the survival of the economy is, in turn, largely contingent on the media. Whatever their avowed function, TV, radio, movies, mass magazines, most publishing, and a majority of newspapers are now primarily dedicated to the marketing of unnecessary goods (either their own or their sponsors'), and without these mass markets the present system would probably flop. Thus, the question posed by Newton Minow to the National Association of Broadcasters—"Is there a person in this room who claims that broadcasting can't do better?"—has an air of crashing irrelevancy. Since the main purpose of the media is to sell the largest number of goods to the largest number of people, the standardization or debasement of the product, whatever the personal attitudes of the producers, is the almost mechanically logical outcome.

For, despite the pained protestation of liberal critics, the present condition of the media is one of the inevitabilities of popular democracy when the will of the compact majority invades the field of culture. One would like to have faith in the instinctual good taste of the masses, but there is absolutely no evidence to confute the findings of media experts like Leo Rosten of *Look* who writes: "When the public is free to choose among various products, it chooses—again and again and again—the frivolous as against the serious, 'escape' as against reality, the lurid as against the tragic, the trivial as against the serious, fiction as against fact, the diverting as against the significant."[4] Correlate this with the following statement by Frank Stanton of

4. In short, Westerns and gangster programs have not been forced on the people—they have been demanded by them. The reasons for these demands are too complicated to pursue here. Suffice it to say, mass culture is the inevitable result of mass industrial society, and inevitably accompanies it. I suspect that when the networks develop methods by which to measure public taste more accurately, the programs will get even worse.

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CBS and you will see why liberal analyses of these problems in terms of Madison Avenue villains are so fearfully inadequate: "A mass medium survives when it maintains a satisfactory batting average on affirmative responses, and it goes down when negative responses are too numerous or too frequent." Taken together, these two propositions coalesce to form an indisputable logic—the logic of profit—which will never be contravened as long as the media must pay its way through mass appeal. For the logic of profit compels the media to manufacture trash, treacle, and triviality as mechanically as the assembly line manufactures cheap and shoddy goods, the difference being that in the media there is no room for a luxury market. Under these conditions, an honest reply by Madison Avenue to Mr. Minow's question might sound very much like the plaint of Brechtian man: *Wir wären gut—anstatt so roh/ Doch die Verhältnisse, sie sind nicht so* ("We would be good—not coarse and crude/ But circumstances just won't have it so").

To speak, then, of "improving" mass culture without developing a much more radical vision of what is wrong with it is to lose sight of the most obvious economic realities. The media will never reform because they survive by selling to the agencies; the agencies will never reform because they survive by selling to the sponsors; the sponsors will never reform because they survive by selling to the masses; and the masses will never reform because they are always being brutalized by the media—a vicious circle which promises only to revolve more ferociously in future. As for pay TV, which some envision as an alternative solution, this plan will merely eliminate the Madison Avenue villain without eliminating the need for a mass market. There will probably be no reform at all without some action of an extreme kind to recover the media from those who control it for profit, but this would mean a radical revision of the whole economic system.[5] Since it is doubtful if our liberal critics are

5. Even this might not prove enough. The only alternative to commercial sponsorship of the media is government sponsorship, but under our

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willing to contemplate such action, we are left with a static situation in which American communications, which should be the instrument of free expression, remains the instrument of "free" enterprise, resisting all efforts at change. The inevitable inference is this: while we all were happily harmonizing with American life, the system was tightening its grip. For the Wall Street villain has not disappeared. He has merely had his face lifted. And if that face is now unseen, it is because he hides behind the anxious figure of the villain from Madison Avenue.

It is, in short, not a group of cynical broadcasters but the economic system itself which accounts for the abuses of the media, the greatest of which is, indeed, reminiscent of the old perfidy of Wall Street: regulated by business interests, the media have turned into near monopolies, holding dire consequences for the future of free speech. For just as the means of production were once controlled by a few special interest groups, so this control is presently exercised over the means of communication. The communications monopoly, of course, is not a prosecutable fact, since the media are actually divided among a number of competing corporations. But since the motive of each is maximum profits, the end result is the same as if all the media were in the hands of a cartel. Here we touch upon the worst evil of the system—not simply its effect on the mass mind but its threat to the function of the intelligentsia, for the victim of this is anyone with something to communicate. As Paul Goodman has described it: "In American society, we have perfected a remarkable form of censorship: to allow everyone his political right to say what he believes, but to swamp his little boat with literally thousands of millions of newspapers, mass-circulation magazines, best-

present system this would simply mean handing the media over to politicians who, having their own products to sell, would be just as subject to mass demand. A truly representative democracy might develop levels of programming along the lines of the British system. But this involves distinctions of cultural classes which American egalitarianism might never countenance.

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selling books, broadcasts, and public pronouncements that disregard what he says and give the official way of looking at things." This species of censorship embodies a new and subtle menace which is extremely difficult to combat—instead of the suppression of ideas, rigid control over the free dissemination of ideas. At present, there is no way for unofficial or unpopular expressions to reach a substantial public without first being processed by the media.[6] A wall is descending in front of the intelligentsia, as thick and impenetrable as a wall of steel, which soon may ghettoize all thought that cannot promise quick profits. In Soviet Russia, this impediment was built under government supervision. In democratic America, it is being fumblingly constructed not through conspiracy but through financial expediency. Despite its recurrent affirmations about freedom of speech, our system is inexorably reducing the avenues of choice until the future might be little more than an endless, unwinding road of uniformity and carefully engineered consent.

What, then, is the true nature of the Madison Avenue villain? We must conclude that he is no villain at all. He is an agent of this system, not its founder, and though he profits by it, he cannot be held ultimately responsible for it. If we condemn him, then his ranks must be expanded to include not just the adman and the broadcaster but anyone who collaborates with the media for the sake of personal reward, anyone who accommodates for the sake of media status. If we regard him as the hired middleman between the profiteer and the masses, then he is all the bought intellects of our society, and all the salesmen, even those marketing art, culture, and thought. He is, in fact, most of us at some time in our lives, some of us at all times; as we

6. This is another problem peculiar to mass society. In a tiny country like Ireland, where an unpublished student paper by Joyce was within a week being discussed all over Dublin, oral communication is still effective. In a country the size of America, the loudest and most barbaric yawp remains unheard unless it is of interest to public relations groups.

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proceed to lose our natural antipathy to this kind of collaboration through frustration, ambition, or financial want, he multiplies among us every day. In substantiation, I should like to conclude this essay by distinguishing two broad types of intellectual middlemen in order to show how the Wall Street villain is presently threatening to implicate us all.

The first type is, paradoxically, often one of the most vigorous critics of Madison Avenue, apparently unaware that he is himself an Intellectual in a Grey Flannel Suit. By taste or design, he is invariably a middlebrow, described by Hannah Arendt as "often well read and well informed, whose sole function is to change cultural objects to make them palatable to those who want to be entertained—and this is worse—to be 'educated,' that is, to acquire as cheaply as possible some kind of cultural knowledge to improve social status." This intellectual is quite often a network hack. But, quite often, he is a well known personality, hired by the media to lend some authority to their vulgarization of high culture: a college president, a university lecturer, a symphony conductor, a novelist, a poet, a psychologist, a theologian, a TV journalist, a cultural critic. His activities are many and varied, but whether he moderates panel discussions, teaches TV cram courses, dispenses superficial psychological advice, popularizes Shakespeare, bowdlerizes dramatic and literary classics, simplifies the problems of music, or formulates quiz questions, his function remains the same: to convert the objects of the intellect into commodities which can be sold across the counter like a bar of soap.

The justification with which this artist or intellectual tries to distinguish his media activities from those of a commercial salesman is familiar to us all—it has to do with "raising the level of popular taste." This oft-repeated formula stubbornly maintains its popularity, despite the obvious and continuing decline in popular taste, precisely because it permits the middlebrow to flourish in a commodity system while still proclaiming

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his belief in liberalism and progress.[7] Ibsen demonstrated long ago that there is no restriction on the human capacity for self-delusion when fame, money, and power are at stake; and these pseudo-altruistic affirmations cannot disguise the fact that, like the Madison Avenue villain, the media intellectual is, in actuality, the volunteer of a system where there is no room for high standards. As such, he is more to be pitied than censured, for he has achieved his popularity by suppressing his true identity. One thinks of Mitchell Miller, once a gifted oboist with a promising future as an interpreter of Cimarosa and Vaughan Williams, who now—replete with an arty beard, a grotesque smile, and a fatuous media personality—cavorts in front of the home screen, enjoining the spectator to "Sing Along With Mitch" in a bland rendering of "When You Were Sweet Sixteen"; or of Groucho Marx, blunting his barbs on a quiz show (his brother Harpo is selling motor oil on TV); or of Alistair Cooke and William Saroyan, on *Omnibus,* patronizing the avant-garde drama; or of Leonard Bernstein, who might have been more than a music teacher or a fancy showman, posturing like a marionette for the admiration of Jewish housewives; or of David Susskind passionately gesticulating against Madison Avenue before unctuously introducing a commercial. These men help to dignify the media's debauching of culture, but only through a corresponding loss in their own dignity, exchanging their talent or humanity for a well-tailored grey flannel suit.

The second group of intellectual middlemen includes many highbrows, for some of our most distinguished intellectuals are now purchasing grey flannel cloth for their wardrobes which they wear during occasional excursions into the world of Madison

7. This rationalization was unintentionally parodied by the quiz show producers who affirmed, in testimony, that they were developing a new respect for the intellect, and by the producers of TV Westerns who contended that their programs gave Americans an educational glimpse into their historic past. Parodied or not, the name for this is middle-class hypocrisy.

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Avenue. Some of these junkets are admittedly made for extra funds; some to advance a reputation in the non-intellectual world; others are justified as an attempt to reach that great untapped soul of America which has hitherto been inaccesible to genuine art or real ideas. But whatever the motive, hundreds now work as part-time or full-time commercial salesmen, promoting book clubs, sponsoring record clubs, endorsing syntopicons, writing for movies and TV, advising industry and the media, guesting on panel and interview shows, and writing popular articles for mass magazines. Most of them, of course, continue to pursue their legitimate work at the same time, so these activities are not of great significance when contrasted with their other contributions. Nevertheless, one feels that some unspoken covenant has been broken which helps to shake our resistance to whatever is pernicious in the culture.

The recent increase in these activities can probably be explained by the intellectual's recent rapprochement with the American middle class, and possibly even by his repudiation of the political in favor of the social scientific discipline. For, like the sociologist hero of George P. Elliott's *Parktilden Village,* who begins by studying the "social significance" of comic strips and ends by producing a successful strip himself, one can be tripped by purely analytical and descriptive procedures into abandoning one's ethical values (when you begin to ask "What is it?" instead of "Is it good?" you are already on the way to joining "it"). At any rate, many intellectuals now openly flout their association with business enterprises, adding—when they admit to selling their reputations—that nothing could be better sold to America than the intellectual life. But the logic of profit always proves stronger than the best of motives, and the ends of intellect are almost never served. The book clubs, if originated for discriminating readers, soon run out of quality books, or, forced to seek a wider membership, soon lower their standards, with the result that the critic starts writing inflated blurbs for second-rate literature. The record clubs usually offer inferior recordings

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which are not moving fast enough in the stores. The movies and TV scripts, if at all out of the ordinary in draft, are quickly rewritten to formula. The mass magazine articles are either pure hackwork or an embarrassment to the writer or suffer from the glossy vulgarity of the surrounding material. As for the panel and interview shows, harmless enough in themselves, they are always dominated by such soupy-minded moderators or long-winded guest "personalities" that the isolated highbrow must join the discussion on the lowest possible level. In a sense these activities are perfectly understandable; the needs of intellectuals are no different from those of anyone else. On the other hand, we should be conscious of what we are exchanging for these tantalizing rewards. In accepting them, we all become Madison Avenue villains, inadvertently serving as front men for the media monopolists whose strategy it is to absorb what they cannot defeat, silencing critics by making them partners in the general debasement of standards for profit.

To sum up, then, the allegory of American life could be just the same as ever, even though its *dramatis personae* have lifted their faces to suit the demands of the time. The American Everyman is no longer an exploited farmer, laborer, or miner: he is the modern consumer, brutalized by the persuasive vapidity of the mass media. The Wall Street villain is no longer twirling his moustaches, but he is still exploiting American resources: controlling communications, degrading culture, and muffling opponents by impounding their organs of expression. If this new exploitation masquerades under the name of "entertainment," and if it is largely responsible for our present affluence, it is no less enfeebling to the health of the nation, for there are other forms of starvation besides the physical. As for the Madison Avenue villain, he is not the source of this spiritual famine, but merely its agent—in a special sense, its victim. In our commodity society, where fame, love, wealth, and power accrue to the most questionable enterprises, he has attained

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these rewards by thwarting and stunting his true potential. In helping to undermine culture, he has actually undermined his own spontaneity and creative life.

What can we do in the face of these conditions which now seem so fixed and irremediable? Here one runs the risk of sounding visionary, or, what is worse, impudent and hortatory, for we are so far from solutions that even a beginning requires a tremendous effort of the moral will. As an immediate objective, one might work toward restoring the failing values of the intellectual community—honor, dignity, integrity—by returning to the traditional intellectual postures of idealism and dissent. If this means the isolation of thought in places where thought is still free (the academy, the little magazine, the scholarly journal, and listeners supported FM radio), then this is still more honorable, if less profitable, than that "worldliness" where the intellectual is tempted to soften or suppress what he knows for the sake of an expanded pocketbook; and, at least, we will no longer be giving our sanction to the mutilation of culture. The ultimate objective—the wresting of the organs of communication from the persuaders and the profiteers—demands more utopian solutions, for it will not be accomplished without renewed radical debate about the complete transformation of society. As a start, we must first partially re-adopt the Wall Street allegory—its insights into the motives of the villain, not its sentimentalization of the hero—stripping it of its melodramatic features and introducing changes appropriate to our time and problems: a cultural radicalism designed to preserve a pocket of America where truth and art may still survive. I realize this defines an attitude rather than a program, but we may have reached the point where an honorable act of resistance is the best we can do. If this seems too little, consider the alternative: truth and art on the marketblock, everyone in a grey flannel suit.

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POEMS

HOPE

To prefer the nest in the linden
By Apartment Eleven, the Shoreham
Arms, to Apartment Eleven
Would be childish. But we are children.

If the squirrel's nest has no doorman
To help us out of the taxi, up the tree,
Still, even the Shoreham has no squirrel
To meet us with blazing eyes, the sound of rocks knocked
together,
At the glass door under the marquee.

At two in the morning
Of Christmas, there is a man at the glass
Door, a man inside the bronze
Elevator. We get off at four,
Walk up the corridor, unlock the door,
And go down stone steps, past a statue,
To the nest where the father squirrel, and the mother squirrel,
and the baby squirrel
Would live, if the baby squirrel could have his way.

Just now he has his way.
Curled round and round in his sleigh
Bed, the child of the apartment
Sleeps, guarded by a lion six feet long.
And, too,
The parents of the apartment fight like lions.
Between us, we are almost twelve feet long.

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Beside the harpsichord a lonely
Fir tree sleeps on a cold
Hill of gifts; it holds out branches
Laden with ice and snow.

Beyond it are paintings by Magnasco,
Ensor, Redon.
These are valued at—some value I forget,
Which I learned from a—I cannot remember the source.

Here, from a province of Norway, a grandfather's
Clock with the waist and bust of a small
But unusually well-developed woman
Is as if invented by Chagall.
Floating on the floor,
It ticks, to no one, interminable proposals.

But, married, I turn into my mother
Is the motto of all such sun-dials.
The sun, shattering on them,
Says, *Clean, clean, clean;* says, *White, white, white.*
The hours of the night
Bend darkly over them; at midnight a maiden
Pops out, says: *Midnight, and all's white.*

The snow-cream my son is dreaming of eating
In the morning, is no whiter than my wife,
And all her lipsticks are like blackberries.
Looking into the cool
Dry oval of her face—snow tracked with eyes,
Lips, nostrils, the gray grained
Shadow of some sorrow, some repugnance
Conquered once, come back in easy conquest—
I read in it my simple story.
Breakfasting among apple-blossoms, the first fiery

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Rainbow that rings, in spring's and dawn's new dew,
The curly-locked Medusa, I—

I—

To put it in black and white,
We were married.

"A wife is a wife,"
Some husband said. If only it were true!
My wife is a girl playing house
With the girl from next door, a girl called the father.
And yet I *am* a father, my wife is a mother,
Oh, every inch a mother; and our son's
Asleep in a squirrel's nest in a tree.

(The mother of one of us
Disappeared while circumnavigating the earth.
The people of a saucer, landing on her liner,
Said: "Take us to your leader."
They were led to the mother.
When she had answered their unasked
Questions, they flew off—and to this day, in another
Star-system many, many light-years away,
She governs the happy people of a planet.

My own mother disappeared in the same way.)

That? That is Pennsylvania Dutch, a bear
Used to mark butter. As for this,
It is sheer alchemy:
The only example of an atomic bomb
Earlier than the eleventh century.
It is attributed to the atelier
Of an Albigensian,
Who, fortunately, was unable to explode it.
We use it as a planter.

We feel that it is so American.

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Sometimes, watching on television
My favorite serial, *A Sad*
Heart at the Supermarket:
The Story of a Woman Who Had Everything,
I look at my wife—
And see her; and remember, always with the same surprise,
"Why, you are beautiful." And beauty is a good,
It makes us desire it. When, sometimes, I see this desire
In some wife's eyes, some husband's eyes,
I think of the God-Fish in a nightmare
I had once: like giants in brown space-suits
But like fish, also, they went upright through the streets
And were useless to struggle with, but, struggled with,
Showed me a story that, they said, was the story
Of the Sleeping Beauty. It was the old story
But ended differently: when the Prince kissed her on the lips
She wiped her lips,
And with a little *moué*—in the dream, a little mouse—
Turned over and went back to sleep.
I woke, and went to tell my wife the story:
And had she not resembled
My mother as she slept, I had done it.

She resembled a recurrent
Scene from my childhood,
A scene called Mother Has Fainted.

Mother's body
Was larger, now it no longer moved;
Breathed, somehow, as if it no longer breathed.
Her face no longer smiled at us
Or frowned at us—did anything to us.
Her face was queerly flushed
Or else queerly pale; I am no longer certain.
That it was queer I am certain.

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We did as we were told:
Put a pillow under her head—or else her feet—
To make the blood flood to her head—or else away from it—
Now she was set.

The sound she had made, falling,
The sound of furniture,
Had kept on, in the silence
Of everything except ourselves,
As we tugged her into position.
Now we too were silent.

It was as if God were taking a nap.

We waited for the world to be the world
And looked out, shyly, into the little lanes
That went off from the great dark highway, Mother's Highway,
And wondered whether we would ever take them

—And she came back to life, and we never took them.

The night has stopped breathing.
The moonlight streams up through the linden
From the street-lamp, and is printed upon heaven.
The floor and the Kerman on the floor
And the gifts on the Kerman
Are dark, but there is a patch of moonlight on the ceiling.

The moonlight comes to the fir
That stands meekly, a child in its nightgown,
In the midst of many shadows.
It has come to its father and mother
To wake them, for it is morning
In the child's dream; and the father wakes
And leads it back to its bed, and it never wakes.

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In the morning our father
In his false white, false red,
Took out his teeth and fed them to his reindeer,
False reindeer, and gave us the presents his elves had made at
the Pole
And gave Mother the money he had made at the Pole—
And explained it all, excused it all
With a cough, the smallest of all small
Coughs; but it was no use, it was unexplainable,
Inexcusable. What is man
That Thou art mindful of him?
A man is a means;
What, amputated, leaves a widow.
He was never able to make the elves real to Mother:
He was a shadow
And one evening went down with the sun.
I have followed in my father's light, faint footsteps
Down to some place under the sun, under the moon,
Lit by the light of the street-lamp far below.
Back far enough, down deep enough, one comes to the Mothers.

Just as, within the breast of Everyman,
Something keeps scolding in his mother's voice,
Just so, within each woman, an Old Woman
Rocks, rocks, impatient for her kingdom.

"I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me
And what can be the use of him I—but that isn't fair,
He is some *use,*" a woman in the twilight sings to me.

When the white nun handed to my white
Wife her poor red son—my poor red son—
Stunned, gasping, like the skin inside a blister,
Something shrank outside me;
I saw what I realized I must have seen

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When I saw our wedding picture in the paper:
My wife resembled—my wife *was*—my mother.

Still, that is how it's done.
In this house everyone's a mother.
My wife's a mother, the cook's a mother, the maid's a mother,
The governess's—
why isn't the governess a man?
The things that *I* buy, even,
In a week or two they go over to my wife.
The Kerman, the Ensor, that grandmother's clock
Look by me with their bald,
Obsessional, reproachful eyes, a family
One has married into, a mother-in-law, a—
What is one's wife's mother's mother called?

Do all men's mothers perish through their sons?
As the child starts into life, the woman dies
Into a girl—and, scolding the doll she owns,
The single scholar of her little school,
Her task, her plaything, her possession,
She assumes what is God's alone, responsibility.

When my son reached into the toaster with a fork
This morning, and handed me the slice of toast
So clumsily, dropped it, and looked up at me
So clumsily, I saw that he resembled—
That he *was*—
I didn't see it.

The next time that they say to me: "He has your eyes,"
I'll tell them the truth: he has his own eyes.
My son's eyes look a little like a squirrel's,
A little like a fir tree's. They don't look like mine,
They don't look like my wife's . . .

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And, after all,
If they don't look like mine, do mine?

You wake up, some fine morning, old.
And old means changed; changed means you wake up new.

In this house, after all, we're not all mothers:
I'm not, my son't not, and the fir tree's not;
And I said the maid was, really I don't know.
The fir tree stands there on its cold
White hill of gifts, white, cold,
And yet really it's green; it's evergreen.

Who knows, who knows?

I'll say to my wife, in the morning:
"You're not like my mother . . . You're no mother";
And my wife will say to me—she'll say to me—

At first, of course, she may say to me: "You're dreaming"—
But later on, who knows?

Randall Jarrell

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A MARRIAGE IN THE 'SIXTIES

As solid-seeming as antiquity,
you frown above
the *New York Sunday Times*
where Castro, like a walk-on out of Carmen,
mutters into a bearded henchman's ear.

They say the second's getting shorter—
I knew it in my bones—
and pieces of the universe are missing.
I feel the gears of this late afternoon
slip, cog by cog, even as I read.
"I'm old," we both complain,
half-laughing, oftener now.

Time serves you well. That face—
part Roman emperor, part Raimu—
nothing this side of Absence can undo.
Bliss, revulsion, your rare angers can
only carry through what's well begun.

When
I read your letters long ago
in that half-defunct
hotel in Oxford's Magdalen Street
every word primed my nerves.
A geographical misery
composed of oceans, fogbound planes
and misdelivered cablegrams
lay round me, a Nova Zembla
only your live breath could unfreeze.
Today we meet

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in the raging desert of our thought
whose single drop of mercy is
each knows the other there.
Two strangers, thrust for life upon a rock
may have at last the perfect hour of talk
that language aches for; still—
two minds, two messages: two worlds, not one.

Your brows knit into flourishes. Some piece
of mere time has you tangled there.
Some mote of history has flown into your eye.
Will nothing ever be the same,
even our quarrels take a different key,
our dreams exhume new metaphors?
The world breathes underneath our bed.
Don't look. We're at each other's mercy too.

Dear fellow-particle, electric dust
I'm blown with—ancestor
to what euphoric cluster—
see how particularity dissolves
in all that hints of chaos. Let one finger
hover toward you from There
and see this furious grain
suspend its dance to hang
beside you like your twin.

Adrienne Rich

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FROM TROLLOPE'S JOURNAL

Winter, 1861

As far as statues go, so far there's not
much choice: they're either Washingtons
or Indians, a whitewashed, stubby lot,
His country's Father or His foster sons.
The White House in a sad, unhealthy spot
just higher than Potomac's swampy brim,
—they say the present President has got
ague or fever in each backwoods limb.
On Sunday afternoon I wandered,—rather,
I floundered,—out alone. The air was raw
and dark; the marsh half-ice, half-mud. This weather
is normal now: a frost, and then a thaw,
and then a frost. A hunting man, I found
the Pennsylvania Avenue heavy ground . . .
There all around me in the ugly mud,
—hoof-pocked, uncultivated,—herds of cattle,
numberless, wond'ring steers and oxen, stood:
beef for the Army, after the next battle.
Their legs were caked the color of dried blood;
their horns were wreathed with fog. Poor, starving, dumb
or lowing creatures, never to chew the cud
or fill their maws again! Th'effluvium
made that damned anthrax on my forehead throb.
I called a surgeon in, a young man, but,
with a sore throat himself, he did his job.
We talked about the War, and as he cut
away, he croaked out, "Sir, I do declare
everyone's sick! The soldiers poison the air."

Elizabeth Bishop

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A CURSE AGAINST ELEGIES

Oh love, why do we argue like this?
I am tired of all your pious talk.
Also, I am tired of all the dead.
They refuse to listen,
so leave them alone.
Take your foot out of the graveyard,
they are busy being dead.

Everyone was always to blame:
the last empty fifth of booze,
the rusty nails and chicken feathers
that stuck in the mud on the back doorstep,
the worms that lived under the cat's ear
and the thin lipped preacher
who refused to call
except once on a flea-ridden day
when he came scuffing in through the yard
looking for a scapegoat.
I hid in the kitchen under the ragbag.

I refuse to remember the dead.
And the dead are bored with the whole thing.
But you—you go ahead,
go on, go on back down
into the graveyard,
lie down where you think their faces are;
talk back to your old bad dreams.

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THE ABORTION

Somebody who should have been born
is gone.

Just as the earth puckered its mouth,
each bud puffing out from its knot,
I changed my shoes, and then drove south.

Up past the Blue Mountains, where
Pennsylvania humps on endlessly,
wearing, like a crayoned cat, its green hair,

its road sunken in like a gray washboard;
where, in truth, the ground cracks evilly,
a dark socket from which the coal has poured,

Somebody who should have been born
is gone.

the grass as bristly and stout as chives,
and me wondering when the ground would break,
and me wondering how anything fragile survives;

up in Pennsylvania, I met a little man,
not Rumplestiltskin, at all, at all . . .
he took the fullness that love began.

Returning north, even the sky grew thin
like a high window looking nowhere.
The road was as flat as a sheet of tin.

Somebody who should have been born
is gone.

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Yes, woman, such logic will lead
to loss without death. Or say what you meant,
you coward . . . this baby that I bleed.

WITH MERCY FOR THE GREEDY

For my friend, Ruth, who urges me to make an appointment for The Sacrament of Confession

Concerning your letter in which you ask
me to call a priest and in which you ask
me to wear The Cross that you enclose;
your own cross,
your dog bitten cross,
no larger than a thumb,
small and wooden, no thorns, this rose.

I pray to its shadow,
that gray place
where it lies on your letter . . . deep, deep.
I detest my sins and I try to believe
in The Cross. I touch its tender hips, its dark jawed face,
its solid neck, its brown sleep.

True. There is
a beautiful Jesus.
He is frozen to his bones like a chunk of beef.
How desperately he wanted to pull his arms in!
How desperately I touch his vertical and horizontal axes!
But I can't. Need is not quite belief.

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All morning long
I have worn
your cross, hung with package string around my throat.
It tapped me lightly as a child's heart might,
tapping second hand, softly waiting to be born.
Ruth, I cherish the letter you wrote.

My friend, my friend, I was born
doing reference work in sin, and born
confessing it. This is what poems are:
with mercy
for the greedy;
they are the tongue's wrangle,
the world's pottage, the rat's star.

FOR GOD WHILE SLEEPING

Sleeping in fever, I am unfit
to know just who you are:
hung up like a pig on exhibit,
the delicate wrists,
the beard drooling blood and vinegar;
hooked to your own weight,
jolting toward death under your nameplate.

Everyone in this crowd needs a bath.
I am dressed in rags.
The mother wears blue. You grind your teeth
and with each new breath
your jaws gape and your diaper sags.
I am not to blame
for all this. I do not know your name.

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Skinny man, you are somebody's fault.
You ride on dark poles—
a wooden bird that a trader built
for some fool who felt
that he could make the flight. Now you roll
in your sleep, seasick
on your own breathing, poor old convict.

IN THE DEEP MUSEUM

Oh my God, what queer corner am I in?
Didn't I die, blood running down the post,
lungs gagging for air, die there for the sin
of anyone, my sour mouth giving up the ghost?
Surely my body is done? Surely I died?
And yet, I know, I'm here. What place is this?
Cold and queer, I sting with life. I lied.
Yes, I lied. Or else is some damned cowardice
my body would not give me up. I touch
fine cloth with my hands and my cheeks are cold.
If this is hell, then hell could not be much,
neither as special or as ugly as I was told.

What's that I hear, snuffling and pawing its way
toward me? Its tongue knocks a pebble out of place
as it slides in, a sovereign. How can I pray?
It is panting; it is an odor with a face
like the skin of a donkey. It laps my sores.
It is hurt, I think, as I touch its little head.
It bleeds. I have forgiven murderers and whores
and now I must wait like old Jonah, not dead
nor alive, stroking a clumsy animal. A rat.

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His teeth test me; he waits like a good cook,
knowing his own ground. I forgive him that,
as I forgave my Judas the money he took.

Now I hold his soft red sore to my lips
as his brothers crowd in, hairy angels who take
my gift. My ankles are a flute. I lose hips
and wrists. For three days, for love's sake,
I bless this other death. Oh, not in air—
in dirt. Under the rotting veins of its roots,
under the markets, under the sheep bed where
the hill is food, under the slippery fruits
of the vineyard, I go. Unto the bellies and jaws
of rats I commit my prophecy and fear.
Far below The Cross, I correct its flaws.
We have kept the miracle. I will not be here.

GHOSTS

Some ghosts are women,
neither abstract nor pale,
their breasts as limp as killed fish.
Not witches, but ghosts
who come moving their useless arms
like forsaken servants.

Not all ghosts are women.
I have seen others;
fat, white bellied men,
wearing their genitals like old rags.

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Not devils, but ghosts.
This one thumps barefoot, lurching
above my bed.

But that isn't all.
Some ghosts are children.
Not angels, but ghosts;
curling like pink tea cups
on any pillow, or kicking,
showing their innocent bottoms, wailing
for Lucifer.

Anne Sexton

AN ADDITIONAL POEM

Where then shall hope and fear their objects find?
The harbor cold to the mating ships,
And you have lost as you stand by the balcony
With the forest of the sea calm and gray beneath.
A strong impression was torn from the descending light
But the night is guilty. You knew the shadow
In the trunk was raving
But as you keep growing hungry you forget.
The distant box is open. A sound of grain
Poured over the floor in some eagerness—we
Rise with the night let out of the box of wind.

John Ashbery

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Angus Wilson

THE WHITES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Most of my more emotional friends objected strongly to the narrow terms on which I visited the Republic (then the Union) of South Africa in January 1961. Was I not like them a man of the left; what then could I want to be doing in South Africa but meeting the new black African Nationalist leaders? To go all that way to study the dying White world was surely the final decadence. The view was echoed again in the Union itself by active members of the Liberal Party, the non-parliamentary, non-racial group that is as left as anyone may admit to with safety in South Africa. For them the surprise was reasonable and more sincerely felt. In the land of Apartheid it is naturally the wish of any person of either spirit or intelligence or of both to defy the racial barrier. It is not easy to do so, but it can be done, particularly in Johannesburg; and it is done in artistic, left or "bohemian" circles there and in the other cities. Who would have better opportunities to leap this hurdle than a visiting writer with no passport or job to lose? It was difficult, I think, for many of these avant-garde South African Whites to take me seriously when they found out my intention.

Of course I was not avoiding Africans, I did in fact meet a number of them, as well as some Indians and some Cape Coloureds; but my purpose even with them was to discover their appreciation of the white life as it is lived in the Union today. On my last night, it is true, I gave myself the treat of an "evening off" spent with Africans, and the hilarity of the occasion

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was certainly a relief after the weeks spent in the suburban gentility of White South Africa.

Nevertheless I am quite unrepentant about the purpose of my visit. There were practical reasons that dictated my narrow subject; time available, possibility of quick contact with the white community through my numerous family there, a personal pilgrimage to a world I had known in childhood—my mother's background. Yet my principal motives were broad and social. I wanted to present to the public of the new English weekly, *The Sunday Telegraph* for which I was writing—a public largely conservative and suburban—an image of themselves as they might behave under stress of racial fear. I hoped that they would be disgusted and, more important, not disgusted at the easy distance of outside judges, but uncomfortably disgusted as at something very close to themselves. I have always thought that Nazi Germany should have been presented to us in this way in the 'thirties as ourselves gone awry. I am fully aware of the danger of this, that by such identification we fail in justice to ourselves and do more than justice to the criminal, that false sympathy may consequently blur our disgust. When, on my first visit to the United States last autumn, I went from New York to the South, some of my New York friends underlined this danger. "We just don't go to the South," they said. I knew what they meant. I met, of course, many attractive, otherwise meaningful, even "good" segregationists in the Southern states as I did Apartheid supporters in the Union. It is these contacts, I believe, that my left friends dreaded. Either you may label the enemy at a distance and then you need have no regard for individuals, or you may live with him daily so that you can forget him in familiarity, as one does a chair or a table. These are the two ways, I think, in which people prefer to treat political opponents; and if ultimate extermination is their aim then they do well. But surely a liberal or humane man must face that sudden confrontation of "niceness," even of "goodness" in our opponents that comes with the first intimacy, when the label

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turns into a human being and before the human being turns into a chair. Without some resolution of this conflict between views we unreservedly oppose and the many sympathetic people who hold them, any liberal, social or political conviction must, I suspect, be most shaky on exactly that personal and emotional level where it is most likely to be tested in times of political stress. This principally was at the back of my mind when I decided to spend some weeks with South African Whites.

In my resolve I was strengthened by watching in reverse the panic reactions of so many European and American liberals against African leaders in other parts of that continent, when they discovered too late that the heroic or saintly negro image they had pasted on to Africa was roughly broken by gangsterism, power jockeying, and other illiberal deportments. Let me be awake to what may be nice in White South Africa, I thought, before the day comes when, threatened with a violent war they have brought upon themselves, they send out their appeal for aid. I know now exactly how prepared I think we should be with aid of every kind to unwilling white refugees from South Africa when that day comes; and exactly how obdurate we must be in resisting their appeals for armed support for their continued racial hegemony. At least I shan't suddenly discover that they are human beings and lose my head at the discovery. The attitude, of course, can be labeled as smug, but only I think because of a current piece of cant that admires calculation in extremists as realism, but expects of liberals or moderates that their political tactics should spring whole from a sort of unpremeditated decency that is akin to spontaneous combustion. In the course of my visit I must also say that, for every sympathetic white, I met a dozen who strengthened my hostility to their racial policy by their personal odium.

If these reasons for concentrating on White South Africa still seem too general and fragile for the reader with his eye on historical inevitability, let me be rash and say that, although I have spoken of the day of reckoning, it seems likely that with

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all the armed forces and police at their command and with a ruthless will to use them, the South African Whites may well maintain their rule for a decade despite the winds of change. And, as an Afrikaner professor said to me, ten years is a little more than the millenium nowadays. It is as well then perhaps even for a realist to consider what kind of creatures these persistent white dodos are.

I must preface my picture of South African White life by declaring some of the factors which inevitably limited my assessment. My time there was too brief; I am not a trained journalist; and I had to rely on what I believe is a more than usual capacity to make an easy rapport with many people in a short space of time. This power is one of my chief advantages as a novelist and I believe it served me well as a general observer. Nevertheless I did not have an opportunity to meet and assess more than a handful of Afrikaner farming people, and those I did meet were in the more civilized Cape area. I did not in fact come face to face with Apartheid extremism in the farms of the Orange Free State or the Plattenland of the Transvaal, that last unreclaimed area of Uitlanders whom even the Orange Free State farmers think of as "wild." Here would be found the most crude expressions of racial prejudice, as indeed of anti-English feeling and of anti-urbanism; here are the isolated farms from which reports and, indeed, police cases of ferocious ill treatment and even murder of native servants come. Nevertheless I met urbanized Afrikaners—"poor white" (a very comparative term in South Africa), business men, and professional men—ardent supporters of Apartheid all, who, in the great push of the Afrikaners to the towns, which is the main white social phenomenon of South Africa, had only left the Plattenland in the last decade or so. In all of them could be found the self-made man's nostalgia for the coarser, simpler life he has fought to leave behind him. This nostalgia is often accounted a sentimental affectation in the successful, but I have always found it one of their few genuine emotions. In these moods of nostalgia for their

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veldt childhood these men often allowed themselves expressions of a savage racialism that they would have been ashamed to show in their new urban life. Inevitably, too, with a large family of English South Africans, who have little contact with Afrikaners, I met a great many more "ordinary" English South Africans than "ordinary" Afrikaners. Through the distinguished Afrikaners whom I contacted, however, I was taken to see some "ordinary" Afrikaner homes, but inevitably my hosts were more on their party manners than were my family and their friends. Strangers meeting inquiring foreigners will disagree, even feel it necessary to show that they are not out to please, but they will do so mostly by design; whereas relations will do so out of impatience, pique or unrestrained habit. Despite this, I met some fierceness from angered Afrikaners and many of my family had prepared themselves to avoid controversy more carefully than I had anticipated. It will no doubt be apparent, too, in my subsequent observations, that unexpectedly I found myself preferring the Afrikaners to the English; but this preference in its origins is not without interest.

As a boy, like most middle-class English children, I was often posed the serious moral problem: which do you prefer, the Walrus or the Carpenter? The model answer, of course, is —neither, each is equally bad. Yet I always persisted in preferring the Walrus. I preferred the exotic to the plainly human, and possibly a certain snobbery assimilated from my parents made me aloof from the humble carpenter. I am sure that in my preference for the Afrikaners can be found both elements. The Afrikaner, to an educated Englishman, is immediately very exotic. The interest of English South Africans is much more subtle; at first sight he (and especially she) seems identical with the most tedious sort of wealthy English suburban commuter; the shades of difference, in fact, are fascinating, but they reveal themselves only slowly. Then the traditional relationship between the English South African and the English middle class is one that excites every element of snobbery (and there are many) in

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the latter. My father had always brought me up to look down socially upon my mother's "colonial" family: they worked hard, had no or few interests outside small commerce, and became rich; he did no work, played very hard, and lost all the money he had. I have tried my best to counteract this inherited prejudice, but my mother's family do not assist by their defiant assertion of their commercial values which by its very vehemence reveals how much they respect the snobbish English social values by which my father labeled them. There was in my visit inevitably an element of longstanding family warfare played out in a new era. But this personal element was, in fact, no distortion, for there is, I am sure, some element of this snobbish *de haut en bas,* of a new poor towards a new rich in all English dealings with those once called "Colonials"—Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, English South Africans. It is the misfortune of the English South Africans that their precarious racial situation does not allow them to treat this English snobbery with the contempt which most affluent Australians, Canadians or New Zealanders now show. American readers, I suspect, even American liberals, may regard with amusement my distaste for the declared money values of the English South Africans. It is also possible that they might find the Afrikaners less charmingly exotic, for the "old" Dutch families of the Cape, at any rate, have much that recalls the "old" families of the South, including a general propensity to declaring themselves as "old" as possible.

So much by way of warning. What then are the patterns of white life in South Africa? There is much talk there, as there is in Western Europe, of growing "Americanization." I have always doubted whether this means much more than the use of certain widely advertised American consumer goods by urban communities with a newly acquired, generally spread prosperity sufficient to purchase them. It is true that Frankfurt, Milan and Lyons, to name outstanding examples, have a supranational quality now that they had not before the war; but this likeness surely is much more to each other than to any cities of the

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United States—they are the new prosperity European Community cities. In England as yet we do not have such cities. The White South Africans are forever apologizing for this "Americanization." Their motives for so doing are many. In the first place the business community is both frightened and disappointed at the United States' official condemnation of Apartheid. And for all their cry that the "real" Americans—i.e. the Southerners—appreciate their position, they know that politically and economically the "unreal" Americans are far more important to them. Then the English South Africans have the same sort of tedious, genteel sort of snobbery about the United States as their counterparts in London suburbs; while Afrikaner Calvinism has made an identification between Mammon and the "American way of living." As I had just come to the Union from a first and perhaps therefore wildly enthusiastic visit to the States, all this infuriated me. I was able with great satisfaction to tell them that the resemblances were purely superficial and even these superficialities only a ludicrous parody of the originals. On occasion, however, Afrikaners, in rebuke of the English visitor, will remind him that America like South Africa is a frontier nation, and that frontier nations know no checks to their aims. This hubris is usually accompained by the even more absurd remark that "of course, you won't find us so naive as the Americans." In truth the only serious parallel that an American visitor would find in the Union would be the likeness between the paternalism of the Afrikaner attitude towards the non-white population and the similar attitude of the conservatives of his own Southern states. And here, it must be said in favor of the Afrikaners, that there are after all only three million whites (one million of these of English descent) out of a population of over fourteen million.

This Afrikaner paternalism is the most immediately striking contrast with the Anglo-Saxon attitudes of the English South Africans. Being of my generation, I inevitably give strangers a first glance that is a mixed Freudian and Marxist appraisal,

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but from either a class or a sexual standpoint the Afrikaner reaction to the overwhelming majority of blacks around him is different from that of the English. The English and the Afrikaner community ordinarily speak of their sexual motivations only inadvertently or under stress—the English are too nice and many have "chapel origins," the Dutch have years of Calvinism behind them. Yet the African (and to some extent the Cape Coloured, though not I think the Indian) does create an immediate sexual impression upon most of the white community. All the Freudian paraphernalia of jokes, slips of the tongue, betrays this to the visitor almost embarassingly in even the most genteel gatherings. The English have succeeded in driving their sexual impulses more deeply into their subconscious. Normally such feelings only show, in particular among the women, in the heightened, excited tone of horror with which they refer somewhat vaguely to the violence with which the "natives" threaten them. Yet the recent outburst of pistol practice by white women was, I think, an externalization of a rape drama that is going on in their minds a good deal of the time. For the rest, like their "menfolk," the white "missus" prefers to remain in a state of bemused, faintly horrified wonderment at the thought of the sexual life of the native "boys" who work for her. A businessman's wife told me of how the wives from the upcountry kraals who visit her "boys" once or twice a year are so undemonstrative that they never embrace or kiss their husbands when first seeing them after so long an absence. From this fact she deduced that the "natives" are naturally cold and unfeeling, and with some evident excitement that they would be "pitiless" if the day ever came when they got power. That her presumption is probably true does not explain the abnormally sexual aura that surrounded her remarks. She said nothing, of course, of what might be the natural reticence of "native" families under her employer's gaze, or of a system that separates husbands from their families over so long a period. The failure of Africans to kiss seems to stick hard in the English gullet. An English-speak-

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ing businessman, otherwise reasonably intelligent and sensitive, suddenly turned upon me in the midst of a conversation upon quite a different theme, and shouted, "They don't *kiss,* you know. They never *kiss.* Unless they're copying what they've seen in the cinema." An African journalist commented to me on all this that the emphasis laid by the English community on mere "necking" had always been a puzzle to him. But to the English South African the "natives" are "they," and especially that sinister, dangerous, contemptible thing—"they" the servants. I was constantly reminded among my South African relations of a grand Protestant Irish noblewoman I knew who would not speak of "them" (the Roman Catholics) until the servants were out of the room. She too lived amid a hostile, socially subordinate alien majority. For English South Africans racial fears are immensely reinforced by social terrors. No English South African would "mind" meeting "educated natives," doctors or clergymen, if they did not fear that the successful African will one day bring in his wake a servant class risen(both in arms and in status). Middle-class English South African women (and most English South Africans are middle class) live in relation to their native servants as English women did about 1860, or perhaps with a few of the fears of a growingly educated servant class that belong more to 1890. One of the few witty revues in Johannesburg (the Government's proposed Censorship Bill will no doubt soon bring it to an end) contained a sketch of an Englishwoman facing the new desegregation in Southern Rhodesia. Entertaining an African professor to cocktails, she can only find one topic of conversation—the "impossibility," the untouchableness, and the slackness and general dangerousness of African servants.

Quite different is the feudal, paternal attitude of the Afrikaner. With considerable justice, Afrikaners will point to their easier intimacy with their native employees or servants, but it is a coarse, patronizing intimacy that could only be tolerable to the most uneducated African. Afrikaners of rural origin—and

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the urban born Afrikaner is a very new phenomenon—are brought up to play with "coloureds" or "natives" until puberty. A lively, pleasantly vulgar farming class who recall the figures in seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings, they love to tell broadly humorous stories and these stories frequently revolve around their friendly relations with the coloureds, which they contrast with the English South African's awkward master-servant attitude. Behind this the Afrikaner rightly detects fear. Yet all these stories in their brutal, patronizing humor only illustrate what a Cape Coloured schoolteacher meant when he said to me that "The English patronize, but the Afrikaner can make you feel like a dog." It was in talk with uneducated Afrikaners, too, that sexual lust for colored and African women slyly yet brutally came to the surface. Much of the reported miscegenation which under South African law can be punished with corporal punishment as well as by imprisonment takes place on Afrikaner farms, although this could be attributed to rural isolation rather than to the Afrikaner view of the natives. Nevertheless in such a world something of the old pioneers' view of African concubines being sanctioned by Abraham's Hagar still survives.

In general it is true to say that the English fear their servants but would not "mind meeting" educated Africans socially if this could help to avoid the social upheaval they fear. The Afrikaner feels at ease with his "boys" and can afford them a freedom of manner that the English "baas" would be unable to control, yet for him the very existence of educated Africans around him is exactly the social upheaval that is intolerable to him. This emotional distaste for the very idea of an African who cannot be patronized, an African who can "answer back," fortifies strongly the Afrikaner distrust of any evolutionary change by which educated Africans could be gradually admitted to an unsegregated society. It inclines him emotionally to Apartheid, which he thinks in any case to be the realistic, strong policy. The English South African, on the other hand, has inherited the

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English tradition of disarming revolution by including every successive wave of potential revolutionary leaders into the social Establishment. It would be inexact to say that he thinks that in compromise or delay lies the realistic approach, for his determination is not to think; he prefers almost self-consciously "to happen to know it," i.e. to accept his inherited instinct as superior to any argument.

It is this alone really that divides the two white groups in their attitude to the African majority, although this division of view on the principal problem of their lives is constantly reinforced emotionally by the legacy of historical hatred. The genuine grievances of the Afrikaner against the concentration camps and other British Yankeeisms of the Boer War are as artificially fostered among the younger generations as Confederate history is in the South. Lord Milner and his team of intellectual young men from Baliol, Oxford, who intended a high-minded Imperialistic settlement of South Africa immediately after the Boer War are treated in the Government school history books of today as so many carpetbaggers. The moderation and compromise of the English Liberal Government of 1906 which finally created the Union are forgotten or comfortably disregarded, or often, no doubt, thought of as English hypocrisy. Beneath the long period of cooperation from 1906 to 1930 successive moderate Afrikaner leaders were taken at their face value by the English speaking community who wanted only to be left alone to make money. Smuts, who was primarily an English hero, was in fact hated by a large part of his compatriots, but the English community never realized this. When at last the Nationalist Government felt strong enough to discriminate in the civil service and the professions against the English it came as a shock, and only with the greatest reluctance have the English South Africans of Natal and other enclaves turned their attention from "business" to the world of politics. Now among the youngest generation of English South Africans the sense of grievance is considerable, but it's far more likely to turn to a

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grudging compromise if that will allow them to get on with making money, rather than petrify into the sort of historic hatred that the Afrikaners feel. On the basic issue of Apartheid there is disagreement reflected in the conflict of the Nationalist government and the United Party, the main opposition party to which most English South Africans (especially the "non-political") belong. Yet, although the English South Africans do not care to admit this, it is not a disagreement on principles but only on method. It is true that many English speaking South Africans who are not attached to either of the left parties—the Progressives or the Liberals—do dislike the inhumanity and ruthlessness of Apartheid, but not actively enough to make much protest. They have no alternative method of maintaining race supremacy to offer and they cannot therefore criticize the Government strongly even on methods. What they do not like about Apartheid is that it demands certain sacrifices from them—unpopularity abroad, violent reaction on occasion from the colored races, restrictive regulations which inevitably at times hamper white activities. They sum up all these disagreeables by complaining that Apartheid is "bad for business." For decades they have abstained from political activity or bureaucratic labor in order to make money. So long as the Nationalist rule did not provoke internal or international difficulties they were content; but world events have caught up with them and they find it easiest to blame this on the Afrikaner government. It is above all the dogmatic, theoretical, intellectual nature of Afrikaner policy—if the last adjective may be used about such lunatic racial ideas as are embodied in Apartheid—that the English South Africans distrust.

The English South Africans are lamentably ignorant of world events outside South Africa; and in particular are determined to ignore the African Nationalist revolutions that are taking place elsewhere on their continent. "You mustn't forget," I was told more than once, "that we have six thousand miles of nothing between us and civilization." And a shrewd business-

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man summed up this ostrich behavior by saying that he proposed to give up flying to Europe and return to the longer sea voyages—"At least," he said, "one won't come down in these damned airports run by a lot of natives." It is natural then for the English South African to look back to a golden age, to the days when the native knew his place. He cannot face this change in its wider African context. To attribute it to the unwise extremism of the Afrikaner government comfortably limits its scope from world to domestic politics. "There's no need to put all this Apartheid down on the Statute book," I was told, "we had a sort of Apartheid before and the native accepted it because it wasn't rammed down his throat." These English South Africans know, of course, that the hardening, the legalization of Apartheid has only come about because the "native" was no longer willing to accept a lower status unless he was compelled to do so. But looking back to the happy past, inclining naturally towards English empirical, instinctive government, the English South African business community feel that they are being governed by a set of theorists—Afrikaner professors and Calvinist ministers. As the English are in a minority of two to one to the Afrikaners and as they have no alternative policy, they give themselves the luxury of withdrawn grumbling and hope vaguely that in the end "good sense" and world "business opinion" will save the day.

Commerce and industry, of course, are no longer exclusively English. It has taken a long time for the ambitious Afrikaner to throw off the Calvinistic rejection of the city and of money as the works of the devil, but there is now a growing new Afrikaner business class. Do they or will they temper the academic, theoretical rigidity of Apartheid racial doctrines? Only very little, I think. Some element of expediency is creeping in. For example, the laws which prevented African consumption of alcohol have now been abrogated under pressure from the White wine producers of the Cape who want the native market. Yet if there are ways in which the doctrinaire quality of Apar-

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theid may be modified by expediency they will not be towards greater humanity or even necessarily towards greater rationality. Apartheid, as it was expounded to me by the professors of Stellenbosch, has a crazy logic of its own, but if Bantustan (the African side of Apartheid which the Africans don't in any case want) were to be seriously applied it would necessitate a policy of extreme complication, subtlety and immense cost with only very long term hopes of repayment. Apartheid in its full purity is, as the English businessmen complain, very "idealistic" and "up in the clouds." The modifications that expediency makes and will make to the pure doctrine are more those of an overworked bureaucracy reducing a perfect blue print to the horrors and shambles of makeshift practice.

The picture is all too familiar from Nazi Germany. The idea of Apartheid is regressive, decadent and anti-human; but much of the inhumanity of the practice is the result of human fallibility, incompetence and cynicism in applying it. I met two Afrikaner "intellectuals" who, as apostles of Apartheid, were disturbed at the imperfect application of their ideals. It was interesting to me to hear from them that should Government practice stray too far from theory they would not openly oppose, for to do so would be to split the ranks of Afrikanerdom. They would seek instead to atone for their mistakes by a more mystic, personal process of leaving the academic world to work on the soil from which they had come. Since their whole lives had been inspired by the hard climb from rural ignorance to a dedicated life of study, the sacrifice would be a real one. I have never felt so depressed at the repetition of human patterns as when I heard this mystic nonsense.

There is, however, one brutal aspect of Apartheid that might be modified by expediency, although the extreme racialists seem in fact to have won the day. The inclusion of the large Indian community of Natal, and above all the mixed community of the Cape—the Coloureds—into all the complicated categories of Apartheid has aroused considerable opposition

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from the English whites of Durban and the whites of both groups of Cape Town. When the Africans made their peaceful march from the township of Langa on Cape Town which so terrified the white population with fears of a Jacquerie, the Cape Coloureds (most of whom have for generations thought of themselves as on the White side of the line) were notably "loyal." To many whites, by no means liberal in their views, it seems stupid and a little shocking to reward such loyalty by segregation. And Afrikaner country people of the Cape area, too, have strong ties with the Cape Coloureds with whom they are often brought up as children. It is notable that Dr. Verwoerd prefers not to have native servants in his house exactly because of this corrupting aspect of old plantation paternalism. The Cape Coloureds have an opera company that performs Italian operas and the general popularity of this with white audiences is in some degree a mark of dislike of this aspect of Government policy. The English speaking white community of Natal, too, have found a special affection for their Indian population which in my boyhood I remember to have been the scapegoat of racial feeling. I was urged again and again in Durban to take note of the higher intelligence and education of the Indians as opposed to the Africans. This new found admiration is in great degree, as one of my more cynical business friends admitted, an expedient desire for allies against African nationalism, but it is also in some degree a feeling by the English Natalers that the Indians are "their" community, whom the Afrikaner government does not understand.

Why in view of this white hostility to these extensions of Apartheid does the Government persist in it? The witch-hunting for "black" people that inevitably goes on when mixed communities are classified is one of the most publicly tragic and brutal aspects of Apartheid as it was of Nazi anti-Semitism. Why so needlessly outrage the ordinary non-political white man's sense of decency? The answer is, I think, that the sincerity of the Apartheid theorists demands this logicality; that even the

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most cynical supporter of Apartheid needs this proof that the doctrine he follows has a "real" meaning; and that Apartheid in some degree like all counter-revolutionary movements must be excessive for only so can it be assured that it is fighting with its back to the wall. The last trek for the Afrikaners is over; there is nowhere for them to go, since the rest of Africa is steadily becoming African dominated (or in popular White South African speech is "nothing" or "nowhere"). Compromise perhaps is still possible with African leaders like Chief Luthuli; it certainly was so until quite recently; but this possibility the Afrikaner mind cannot conceive if it is to remain insane. The shape of their myth demands the march onwards to Valhalla, to the bunker in Berlin, taking with them the alarmed but feeble English. To justify this suicidal march it is necessary to push everything to extremes. And so Indians, Cape Coloureds, Malays, all must be put through the cruel machine as part of the tragic drama—the drama of the little handful of brave Afrikaner whites who are fighting all the corrupting forces of the world's so-called progress. Of course, even here, there is some measure of expediency, witness the playing down of that anti-Semitism which was so strong a feature of Afrikaner nationalism when Hitler still might have redeemed them from British bondage.

What is it all for, this prolonged suicidal fight, which, at any rate, until a year or two ago, could have been avoided by compromise with moderate African leaders anxious for white financial and technical aid? In some degree, I think, one has to answer that paranoia has bred its own world hostility and this in turn has united all South African Whites save a handful of the more intelligent in a paranoid rally. Then, for non-political men with much to lose, an extremist policy which assures them that, if they stand firm and make no compromise, they need lose nothing, has a desperate attraction. For a community that has given itself to acquiring, it is difficult to believe in the social or political necessity of dispensing with any part of its acquisitions. The least convinced supporters of Apartheid—the busi-

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ness community—are perhaps the most attracted by its "give up nothing" extremism, as they are often the most annoyed by the dangers this intransigence entails. Are there no motives for Apartheid other than racial lunacy, racial fear and economic greed? Many supporters of the policy do in fact announce a positive white way of life that they are resolved to defend.

To the visitor from abroad this way of life is usually presented as a rather vague anti-communism. The average white South African's knowledge of the outside world is rudimentary, and this ignorance is fostered by a censored and, in any case, poor quality press and by the self-protective desire not to know. Of what communism, then, consists, these partisans of anti-communism are largely unaware. More than once South African whites of my acquaintance took comfort to themselves that if their lives were threatened by a black uprising, they were at least free of the nuclear threat under which the rest of the world trembles. That this belief is absurd does not prevent them from holding it. Their anti-communism springs from no sense of a Russian or even Chinese threat; it is largely used to give their cause respectability in the eyes of industrialists and businessmen abroad; and no doubt it has some success. This is not to say that the infiltration of communism among African Nationalists or indeed among Liberal whites is not a reality; one has only to talk with some of them for a while to be treated to those stock Marxist analyses and terminologies that so often betray the fellow traveler. But I do not for a moment think that the White South African who boasts of his country as the last stand against communism really distinguishes between African Nationalists who are communists and those who are not. There is none of the reality communism has for the Fascist supporters of Franco or Salazar. Anti-communism is merely a phrase.

Is there nothing that Apartheid policies are really defending? I think for a vast mass of whites, and particularly the more stupid, the less educated and the comparatively poor, the motive is purely economic. There was serious unemployment among

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poor Afrikaners in the early 'thirties. The Nationalist government has shored up this section of the community with protected employment and special grants so that they can never again fall to a black level. For them Apartheid means the assurance that they exist, for their existence largely consists in "belonging to the White community." For a great number more whites at all economic levels, Apartheid seems to stand between them and a gradual retreat before black demands which would mean at last emigration from what is a lotus eating paradise. For the English this emigration would be intolerable in its sharp descent in social scale and domestic comfort; for the Afrikaner emigration would be unthinkable in its destruction of his national pride and spiritual self-esteem. But for a very small number of adherents both English and Afrikaner there is more than just this self-preservation, they believe that White South Africa has a culture worth defending. Is there any justification for this?

I find it hard to think so. Life in the cities, at any rate, is far easier for the mass of whites than in either Europe or the United States. African servants it is true are not so easily found now that increasing industrialization calls upon their labor. Apartheid too decreases the African domestic labor available. Yet there is still more domestic help than any other middle-class people know. The climate in Johannesburg and the Cape at any rate is excellent. The countryside is beautiful, food plentiful. English White South Africans have built out of this a gracious living, country club, suburban paradise of cocktail times and messing about with boats. "Culture" is as always in such groups relegated to the women and in general does not rise above Book Club level. There are cultivated intelligent groups and ease of life makes their company refreshingly "civilized" in a more hurried modern world. Johannesburg with its vast Jewish population has something of New York, something of Frankfurt, something of Vienna to offer on the cultural level. But of English and Jewish alike it is impossible to find anything distinctive enough from European or American living to

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justify any claim to a separate White South African culture. Some of the best writers like Dan Jacobson have left the country; others like Nadine Gordiner remain to cope. For the artist this is a personal problem. But both these writers are Anglo-American writers with South African subjects to exploit.

For the supporters of Apartheid, in any case, this is not the culture that is in question. Apartheid is a defense of the traditional Afrikaner way of living. There is much that is attractive if narrow in this plantation-type life, especially in the older, more cultivated culture of Cape Province. Yet even here wealthy refugees from the less easy living of Europe have imported English suburbanism or Hollywood living. How long will the Cape Dutch world resist this? And in other areas, the Orange Free State and Transvaal, migration to the cities is rapidly denuding the farms of all but African managers. It is difficult to speak of a literature in a language that one does not read; and I object strongly to the illiberal contempt that is often shown towards the cultures of small groups. Nevertheless, though there are excellent Afrikaner writers like Uys Krige who are clearly concerned to maintain their contact with the native language, the greater part of Afrikaner literature—its chief cultural boast —is rural epic or lyric poetry which, having flourished in the agrarian slump of the 'thirties, surely must disappear before the urbanization of the Afrikaners. It is difficult, in fact, to find a sufficient white culture of any sort to give solid support for a determined campaign of resistance to African nationalism.

Does this mean that Apartheid will die away because it has insufficient spiritual motivation? I do not think so. Men will die for very insufficient legends. They will also die in defense of their material possessions, and more, importantly, at this present stage of the South African struggle, will exterminate others ruthlessly to preserve their own material well-being. If the Afrikaner could trek into heroic, pioneering solitude elsewhere, he would do so. As he cannot, the will to heroic suicide is very strong. I only met one shrewd Afrikaner liberal who believed that this

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mystic will to fight on at all costs was hollow, that it would as suddenly give way to a masochistic capitulation. All other observers of the scene whose opinion I valued believed that the Afrikaner Nationalists will never give way of their own accord.

Is there any element in South African life that will force the Apartheid supporters to compromise short of the eventual racial war that everyone else believes will come sooner or later? All but the most intransigent Apartheid Afrikaners and the most extreme African Nationalists (I suppose also Communists who are making hay with the present situation) hope desperately to avoid this conflict. The factors on which they pin these hopes do not seem to me very immediately reassuring. There is much talk in liberal circles of the pressure that international finance will bring to bear on the South African government to modify its policy. Much hope is pinned on various Johannesburg millionaires. Various fancy dialectics are invented to describe this inevitable antithesis. I am not competent to judge the purely economic arguments, but the political arguments reminded me all too forcibly of the hopes placed on an "inevitable" conflict between Thyssen and Hitler in the 'thirties. Outside pressure? Once again it is the moral duty of certain South African liberal circles to urge the foreign visitor to encourage anti-South African economic and political policies in his own country. I have no doubt that this is morally right, but of any immediate or even near effect I am far more doubtful. In any case the agreement of foreign countries to impose economic sanctions upon the new Republic is a thin hope. What of internal dissensions? I feel sure that the official opposition, the United Party, will prove ineffective, and that the English speaking community which mainly supports it will do little more than grumble. Their main strength came from their relation to England. This has now been severed. In any case for some time now they have been alienated from a welfare England that they felt to be alien and "socialistic," a place mainly to be dreaded as the least uncomfortable refuge should flight from a black Africa become

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necessary. It was discontent with this inept United Party opposition that produced the Progressive Party. This small parliamentary Splinter party composed of some of the most intelligent whites of both races would give a limited, gradually extending, franchise, based on education and/or property to Africans. They have never yet faced an election and, with the present exclusively white electorate, may well lose their seats. In any case it seems doubtful if such offers will any longer satisfy the younger African Nationalists. More valuable perhaps in dissolving racial barriers are the activities of the non-racial, non-parliamentary party, the Liberals, and of those stalwart middle-class white women, whose emotional hostility to the brutal effects of Apartheid have led them to form the Black Sash movement, which in practice alleviates some of the worst cruelties of Government logic. But both these groups are small and ever liable to governmental suppression.

As to a split in the Afrikaner ranks, I am not sanguine. Many young Afrikaners, of course, are to be found in every shade of opposition. Eleven prominent ministers of the Reformed Church recently protested at the decision to include Cape Coloureds in the segregation. But ostracism was quickly their lot. For the rest, one evening stands in my mind, when a group of prominent, able, Afrikaners began to criticize the working of the Apartheid policy. Some English-speaking South Africans took this as a signal for cooperation. Instantly the Afrikaners rounded on them. "Don't think our criticism means that we will join you," they cried. "We will never break the ranks of Afrikanerdom." I believe this is true. In the last resort the situation can only be resolved by African strength. The failure of the proposed great strike this year suggests that it will be some years before this strength is sufficient to fight, unless assistance from the new African states becomes a reality. And if a fight does come it is difficult to believe that the Afrikaners will not resist to the death—though death, in view of the opposing numbers, it must surely be.

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Robert Greer Cohn

SARTRE VERSUS PROUST

In his latest important work, *Critique de la raison dialectique,* Jean-Paul Sartre writes from a frankly neo-Marxist position, a highly theoretical Marxism laced with modern French existentialism and a renewed phenomenological approach. In some broadly-sketched early pages of the book, he describes the sort of compromise position—midway between the old "escapist" bourgeois idealism and the new "totalizing" commitment to the struggle for liberty—which characterized Parisian university thought in his student days, around 1925, when he was twenty years old:

> We set out blindly along the dangerous path of a pluralistic realism which sought men and things in their "concrete" existence. Nevertheless we remained within the framework of the "dominant ideas" . . .

We are reminded of the earthy Nietzschean individualism and *déculture* of Gide's influential *Nourritures terrestres,* and we understand better the word "dangerous" here if we think of Céline and Montherlant and their affinities with fascism. The scandal of the underprivileged had begun to haunt the consciences of the upper classes (including the academic world) with a fresh insistence, bringing inner conflict and "disaggregation"—familiar Marxist terms—but still, in Sartre's view, the youth managed, through the ever-available *mauvaise foi,* to skirt the deep issues. This hidden conflict was evidenced by the ambivalent attitude of the writers of the time, who not only turned

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against the tradition of the ruling society—while remaining in its framework, depending on it for their livelihood—but also revolted against the very language which expressed and justified it: hence phenomena like dada, futurism, literary "terrorism," and the myriad voices of Cretans calling all Cretans liars.

Though we may feel that the Marxist glasses are hardly the most favorable for a clear view of such matters, Sartre's refurbished lenses will do for a rough estimate; and we may go on from there to add that the Sartre of *La Nausée* (1938, aetat 33) was still very much a child of this climate: the epigraph from Céline: "He's a fellow without collective importance, he's just a plain individual," the parodies of modern figures like Proust and Gide, the atmosphere of thorough revulsion against the rentier self (Roquentin is financially independent and mortally bored), frenzied discontent with all manner of patness or smugness. . . . And, true to the doubleness of the mood, the half-way nature of the revolt, even as he tries to purge himself of the past via symbolic vomitives, he is held by its magnetism and owes his best pages to its delicate, highly-evolved means of expression. The very nature of pastiche implies this doubleness, as it had with Proust's own parodies of Balzac, Flaubert, the Goncourts; and, whatever the relative dosage of irony and subjugation, Proust is surprisingly often present in this little masterpiece: in the uneasy and cerebral love-affair of Anny and Roquentin, with its "privileged moments" and their awareness of the "irreversibility of time"; in the themes of solitude, of perversion, of the visions induced by place-names, of the sudden crystallization of emotion triggered by insignificant objects (like the muddy shingle, the oak-tree roots), and above all the haunting little melody (here modified to a saxophone air) which brings on the revelation of a possible artistic vocation. Ironic, certainly; and also a study in fascination amounting to something like obsession.

There are some other aspects of the *entre-deux-guerres* era which Sartre does not mention. For example, it seems likely that the impact of World War I, in many ways more horrible than

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II, and coming as it did after a long interval of peace amidst the pleasure-whirl of *la belle époque,* had much to do with the "breakdown" aspects of art: a sort of symbolic purging of the shellshocked nightmare. Even more importantly, I believe, the eccentric, fitful, compulsively provocative manifestations have to do with the formidable challenge of the Symbolist masters—Mallarmé, Valéry, Proust, Joyce, etc.—and in this the sensitive youth were undoubtedly behaving like some well-known examples of individual sons of mercilessly eminent men. Proust, accordingly, along with some other Symbolists,[1] will continue to show up in Sartre's pages like a revenant father-ghost, a bit reminiscent of the one in *Hamlet,* or *Wilhelm Meister.* His attempts to exorcise it are, like much of his writing, fairly peremptory, but nonetheless worthy of attention, considering the stature of the opponents.

In *L'Etre et le Néant* (1943), Sartre deals Proust a glancing blow:

Proust seeks continually to discover, by intellectualistic decomposition, in the temporal succession of psychic states, bonds of causality between these states. But at the end of these analyses, he can offer us nothing but results like the following: "As soon as Swann could think of [Odette] without horror, as he saw once more kindness in her smile, and as *the desire to keep her away from everyone else was no longer added by jealousy to his love,* this love *became* again a taste for the sensations that Odette's person gave him, the pleasure he derived from admiring as a spectacle or from interrogating as a phenomenon the lifting of one of her looks, the formation of one of her smiles, the emission of an intonation of her voice. And this pleasure, different from all others *had ended by creating in him a*

1. Sartre has long been preparing a book on Mallarmé which, it is said, will try to make up for the unfair "job" he performed on Baudelaire. The title of *Un Coup de Dés* haunts the memory of a character in *Le Sursis,* and there are many allusions to Mallarmé in his study of Genet. Rimbaud is often present in *Les Chemins de la liberté* (particularly *Le Sursis*) and *L'Enfance d'un chef.* Joyce's influence is obvious in various episodes of *Le Mur* and *La Nausée.*

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need of her, which she alone could appease by her presence or her letters . . . *Thus by the very chemistry of his suffering,* after having *made jealousy with his love,* he began again to *manufacture affection,* or pity, for Odette." [Sartre's italics. *L'Etre et le Néant.*]

Now, it is abundantly clear from the nature of his novel that Proust is speaking metaphorically and not "causally," i.e. pseudo-scientifically. Such metaphors as "chemistry" and "manufacture" are quite rare in him and it is really unjust—if typical of point-scorers like Sartre—to single out and doctor a passage like this one. Even so, though ungraceful, it is not certain that they are altogether inept. For, granting that causality had long since gone out with Hume—and Proust along with his cousin Bergson and his entire era, in full revolt against positivism, was certainly aware of it—still, *faute de mieux,* his metaphors manage to point to a recognizable course of psychic events. Proust's terms may remind us of certain mysterious symbols of his coeval, Odilon Redon, the generation of emotions from their opposites through spiralling coils reminiscent, in turn, of the whirlpool of the Tao. Can the vertiginous *en soi—pour soi* merry-go-round of Sartre do any better? Let us consult his familiar pages on love in *L'Etre et le Néant*:

To transcend the transcendence of the Other or, on the contrary, bury in myself that transcendence, without removing the character of transcendence, these are the two basic attitudes that I take toward the Other. . . . Each of these two attitudes is the death of existentialism and a renewed phenomenological approach. In the other one, that is to say that the failure of one *motivates* the adoption of the other [p. 401; my italics].

The notion of *motivation,* it is apparent, is even more "causal" than Proust's *chemistry* which (like Baudelaire's *alchemy* of art) is, though barely so, more suggestive. And conceding that Sartre's terms are more complex than Proust's on their discursive philosophic plane, underneath them there is the same primordial oscillation of emotion from negative to positive

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and back, since it is the sense of "failure" which "motivates" the changes. On a more fully realized, artistic plane, Proust, in other pages of his novel, depicts psychic phenomena with the intricacy of Sartre: for example, Swann's desire to win the esteem of Odette, and hence of himself, by overbidding ("transcend the transcendence of the Other") and, conversely, to see himself as she sees him and become an *object* of affection, or pity, for himself. Hence his generosity on the one hand and on the other the odd "pleasure of the intelligence" he takes in being victimized by her infidelity, *knowing* the awful truth. The convolutions of this affair embrace rather more of the involved inter-human reality than Sartre's abstractions. Moreover it has been noted by critics that Sartre seems to be describing a pair of incredibly cold and gamey lovers who never really touch each other, and this is true of his "novels" as well; the emphasis is obsessively on oneupmanship and no wonder, then, that Sartre shows so little personal interest in the opposite sex, reserving all his warmth for proletarians and the dream of fraternity.

Proust can easily defend himself against the charge of "intellectualism," and on occasion has been goaded into taking the trouble to do so explicitly: "The book is in no way a work of reason . . . its most trifling details have been supplied to me through feeling; because I first of all noticed them deep within myself, without understanding them, having as much trouble to change them into something intelligible as if they were foreign to the realms of the intellect. . . ." (Quoted in Hindus, *The Proustian Vision.*) And *A la Recherche* almost throughout testifies to the man's concern with "synthesis" and a "total" view: the eternal Return of the privileged moments, the kaleidoscopic modulations of the persons and the places, the roundaboutness of the little promenades and the eventual meeting of the two main Ways, the bending on itself of the macrocosmic whole which, like the Kabbalistic serpent, through spiralling coils "bites over and over its dazzling tail" (Valéry), creating, as much as possible

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in the strung-out condition of writing, a feeling of the variegated harmony and simultaneity of life.

And what is synthesis without the primary building force of existence: love? Tolstoyan love of life—not just some sector or faction of it à la Sartre—is what gives us so often, particularly in the early volumes, Proust's good candid voice, the bell-tone of his poetic prose. Sartre's tone—allowing the authenticity of his writing in certain pages of *La Nausée,* e.g. the Sunday promenade and, more rarely, in *Les Chemins*—is too frequently mechanical, forced, *voulu,* demonstrative, hurried, polemical. Proust is more patient, sweeter, more *there.* He is an artist.

To dub Proust "analytic" is doubly unworthy of Sartre, not only because he is far less of an artist than Proust but also because he knows that analysis is a necessary moment of the knowing process, that it is even built into (though integrated out of sight) the subtlest instinct or vision. Proust knew, as well as Pascal, Hegel, Bergson, Sartre himself, that if the last word is for synthesis ("instinct" in the following passage, "imagination" elsewhere in his novel), *up to* that last, analysis plays a decisive role in any creativity. And so Proust writes: "each day I attach less value to intelligence [but] if intelligence does not merit the supreme crown, it alone can bestow it. And if in the hierarchy of virtues it has only the second place it alone can proclaim that instinct must occupy the first place." (Preface to *Contre Sainte-Beuve.*)

By 1945, when he wrote his introduction to *Les Temps Modernes,* Sartre had worked up considerable momentum, and chose this terrain for a frontal assault on Proust:

This legend of the poet's irresponsibility that we denounced a moment ago, springs from the analytical mind. Since the bourgeois authors consider themselves as peas in a can, the solidarity which unites them with other people seems strictly mechanical to them, i.e., a mere juxtaposition. Even if they feel strongly about their literary mission, they think they have done enough when they have described their own nature or that of their friends. Since all men

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are alike, they will have helped all of them by enlightening everyone about himself. And as they start from the same postulate as analysis, it seems very simple to them to use the analytical method to know themselves. Such is the origin of intellectualist psychology, the perfect example of which we find in Proust's works. A paederast, Proust thought he could use his homosexual experience to describe Swann's love for Odette; a bourgeois, he presents this sentiment of a rich, idle bourgeois for a kept woman as the prototype of love. Obviously, then, he believes in the existence of universal passions, the mechanism of which does not vary much when one modifies the sexual characters, the social condition, the nation or the time of the individuals who feel them. After thus "isolating" these unalterable affections, he will be able to start converting them, in their turn, into elementary particles. Abiding by the postulates of the analytical mind, he does not even think that there may be a dialectic in sentiments, but only a mechanism. Thus social atomism, the position of retreat for the contemporary bourgeoisie, brings about psychological atomism. Proust has *chosen to be a bourgeois,* he has made himself the accomplice of the bourgeois propaganda, since his work contributes to spreading the myth of human nature.

We are convinced that the analytical approach is dead and that its unique role today is to trouble the revolutionary conscience and isolate men in favor of the privileged classes. We do not believe any more in the intellectualist psychology of Proust and we consider it harmful. Since we chose his analysis of passionate love as an example, we will probably enlighten the reader by mentioning the essential points on which we disagree with him entirely.

First, we do not accept *a priori* the idea that passionate love is an affection constitutive of the human mind. It could very well have, as Denis de Rougemont suggested, a historical origin related to Christian ideology. More generally, we think that a sentiment is always the expression of a certain way of life and a certain conception of the world, common to a whole class or time, and that its evolution is not caused by I know not what inner mechanism but by these historical and social factors.

Secondly, we cannot admit that a human affection is composed of molecular elements which are juxtaposed without modifying one another. We consider it to be not a well adjusted machine but an

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organized form. We do not conceive the possibility of *analysing* love because the evolution of this sentiment, as of all others, is *dialectic*.

Thirdly, we refuse to believe that a homosexual's love has the same character as a heterosexual's. The secret, forbidden character of the former, its aspect of black magic, the existence of a homosexual free-masonry, and this damnation to which the invert is aware of dragging his partner with him: it seems to us that all these facts influence the whole sentiment to the very details of its evolution. We maintain that a person's various sentiments are not juxtaposed but that there is a synthetic unity of emotional functions and that each individual moves within an emotional world which is his own.

Fourthly, we deny the individual's origin, class, milieu, nation, to be mere concurrents in his sentimental life. On the contrary, we think that every affection, as any other form of his psychic life, *manifests* his social situation. This worker, who gets a salary, who does not own his working tools, who is isolated by his work from the substance of his material, and who protects himself from being oppressed by becoming conscious of his class, would not feel, under any circumstances, like this analytical-minded bourgeois, who, because of his profession, entertains polite relations with other bourgeois.

So, against the analytical mind, we turn to a synthetic conception of reality, the principle of which is that a whole, whatever it is, is different, by nature, from the sum of its parts.

We have already dealt with Proust's supposed intellectualism, so let us address ourselves now to the other issues in some detail. Firstly, Sartre reveals here considerable and wilful ignorance about the nature of the "poet's responsibility"—willful because in his *Qu'est-ce que la littérature* he made a sharp (and arbitrary) distinction between poets and prose writers in the matter of *engagement,* leaving the former a free independent status to create the "ornaments" of culture; and Proust is nothing if not a poet. But actually the fuller truth is more elusive than Sartre would have it in *either* of these two texts. Perhaps the best answer to Sartre's simplifications is to quote his rejoinder to a

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journalist who had questioned Gide's manhood on the grounds that he was "chilly" and preferred to stay indoors, wrapped in a shawl; Sartre righteously replied "mais il y a *des* courages"—there is more than one kind of courage. Might we not say with equal justice "Il y a *des* engagements"?

The lesson of labor, patience, self-discipline, devotion, unsentimental idealism involved in a work like *A la Recherche* would seem to some of us to be a sufficient commitment to society. After all, it is the civilizing force which ultimately counts, not the particular direction of it. Though Proust showed considerable interest in social questions—especially the Dreyfus case—obviously, given his temperament and build, he could no more have cut the kind of figure Sartre does than the latter could effectively imitate Maurice Thorez. And *do* the Calas pamphlet of Voltaire, Zola's *J'accuse,* Gide's *Voyage au Congo* bulk as large in our estimation of these men as Sartre claims? Only for the trivial, and essentially philistine, view which would run down Shakespeare because of a few unthoughtful pages on women or Jews, slight Yeats because of his inconsequential and naive reactionary politics.

Secondly, Sartre calls Proust flatly and unsportingly a "pederast" (a technique he could have learned from Senator McCarthy), all the while knowing better, *vide* the following passage from *L'Etre et le Néant*:

> He does not wish to allow himself to be considered as a thing. . . . He would be right in fact if he understood that phrase "I am not a pederast" in the sense of "I am not what I am". That is to say if he declared "To the degree that . . . I performed these acts I am a pederast. To the degree that human reality defies all definition by acts, I am not one."

Proust precisely reveals this human complexity by (a) admitting fairly openly that he had performed homosexual acts and (b) in his novel, condemning homosexuality from a socially responsible viewpoint (not quite Sartre's—) either directly, in

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some outright attacks, or indirectly by the grotesque quality of most of the portrayed inverts or again, tacitly, by refusing to have his protagonist, or Swann, be one. This attitude, as opposed to Gide's, to whom he confided it—"You can say anything provided you do not say "I"—is part of the subtle moral force which gives his art, unlike Gide's, vital direction. Proust *is* a pederast, in sum, but not *simply* one: he is a struggling and very much concerned human being.

Equally unproductive is the charge that "Proust thought he could use his homosexual experience to describe Swann's love for Odette." In the first place, it is idle to assume that a pederast —if he is not *simply* one, and is there such?—cannot have sincere experience of love, either active or imagined, for the opposite sex. In the case of Proust there is a wealth of evidence that he had heterosexual experience as well as feelings. And in any case, an awareness of the nature of love's genesis, (after an initial vague polymorphous phase) from love of the mother, and father, to all sorts of other people including the female who "replaces" the mother—as various mistresses of *A la Recherche* do, in Proust's own honest and knowing words—should have rendered Sartre's views more just and flexible here. Proust, whose work is a study in the evolution of emotion through quite specific historical conditions is easily more "dialectical" than his assailant: certainly than Sartre is in these pages where, with a boorish heaviness, he implies that there are *only* differences between any two experiences of love, or sex. In other pages of *L'Etre et le Néant,* which he has apparently forgotten, Sartre discusses the reversible nature of sexual possession, involving both active and passive aspects in both sexes (see "the hole," p. 706). And though we will gladly, gratefully, grant "la petite différence," still, from Plato's androgyne to modern biological teaching about the evolution of sexual differentiation and the "suppressed potentialities," we have learned to approach the subject with some tolerance of ambiguity. Hence, for example, the male novelist has a right to describe the inner world of his feminine characters (Madame

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Bovary, Anna Karenina, Molly Bloom) providing he is conscious of his margin of deficiency and is shrewd enough to avoid it. And by the same token, even more clearly, Proust can understand the feelings of a man for the opposite sex, particularly if his man is a civilized, sensitive and cerebral one like Swann or Marcel.[2] Sartre, who was raised by his widowed mother, and informs us most convincingly about the inner life of Daniel, his pederast, ought to tread more lightly in these realms.

The invective implied in the word "bourgeois" hurled at poor Proust similarly loses much of its power when we remember that Sartre terms himself a bourgeois—as well as a "slimy rat" (he seems to have gone to school to David Zaslavsky)—elsewhere; the reputations of both men will probably survive despite this sad condition. Though no Proust, Sartre is obviously a powerful somebody.[3] Hence—and because he has had an unfortunate influence on artistic evaluations, and we can ill afford such losses at a time when the sense of value is generally so shaky—he is to be taken seriously, even when he is being as careless as he obviously is in the quoted passages.

We may thoroughly understand Sartre's response to the needs of mid-twentieth-century France, which seem objectively to call for a renewed emphasis on action, choice, will, *praxis,* commitment to urgent issues. We are also aware that French literature does not stop with Proust, that much has been added, even in the despaired-of genre of the novel, by a dozen lively figures and some fresh perspectives; conversely, that the cult of masterpieces can be deadening, academic, or, as Sartre puts it,

2. Proust was not so successful in avoiding his margin of deficient insight or experience in the Albertine episodes mainly because he died before he could revise them.

3. Occasionally he returns to more honest views on art, even in regard to Proust: "I know . . . in the greatest artists there is much beyond [mere escapism] . . . in Proust one finds a human experience, a thousand paths" *Qu'est-ce que la littérature,* p. 208. Elsewhere, however, he calls him a "fat lady stuffing herself with candy bars" and in the midst of an article on Husserl he exclaims: "At last we are rid of Proust!"

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that a return to the eternal debate of Montaigne and Pascal may be an excuse for ignoring Malraux or Camus. But, though we may welcome this youthful revolt for its own sake, as a sign of continuing life or, secondarily, as a "breather" after a rich symbolist harvest which threatened to overwhelm us, the time always comes again when we feel that youth and revolt are not the whole story and we need the challenge of past glories. And we begin to wonder: must we really bury Proust in order to pitch in with the period of Beckett and Sarraute? Camus—as indeed Beckett and Sarraute themselves—managed to reconcile something like awe for Proust (*L'Homme révolté*) with contemporaneity; and though Sartre is likely the more impressive figure of the two, there can be no doubt as to which has the greater commitment to art.

In conclusion we may say that the whole force of Sartre's wrongheaded intent in regard to art is summed up in his attitude toward posthumous fame. He is dead against any attempt to achieve it and sees this as another kind of escapism, a failure to pitch in like a man and take the consequences of struggle and mortality. Yet a belief in transcendence, to which Sartre subscribes in other forms, seems indispensable to human striving, however reservedly, hesitantly, and belatedly expressed. If, as he repeatedly says, man is not what he is, and this is the condition of his freedom, his humanity, then the desire to be something beyond the whole of our limited given condition of self is a very human one. That is why most men continue to desire progeny and, some, the spiritual equivalent implied in creativity. Or would Sartre really, as he unconvincingly proclaims in his dazzling slap-dash rampage through literature, have his exemplary image of man die out with his last *ad hoc* gesture? Has he really forgotten the Socratic lesson? According to the enlightened views of the Greek, it is Sartre who is the escape-artist, eluding the fuller responsibilities of the hour; and it is only a naive materialism which denies that a Mallarmé, whose personality produced a vivid impact on an extraordinary group of individuals, a

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Proust, with the magnificent look of a "Persian prince," Joyce with his air of utter confidence, Kafka, whose eyes were memorable for their pure expression, were exceedingly *present* in their own times, but present with the glow that says: "I have wonderful news. But it will take years for even the most sympathetic friend to fully understand, because, under my guidance, he *and eventually all men* must learn to see in new ways." What more—or as Tolstoy put it, how much land—does a man need? To be recurrently cited in the newspapers and literary gossip sheets? To be played on Broadway? *Libre à lui.*

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Selma Fraiberg

TWO MODERN INCEST HEROES

Freud has shown that the theme of incest in its manifold disguises is ubiquitous in the literature and art of all ages and all times. The variations upon this theme are produced by the culture and the forms and symbols which it lends to disguise, by the degree of repression which the culture dictates and by the personality of the artist who employs these materials in his work.

But until this century no writer had to contend with the idea that the universal dread of incest had its origins in a repressed wish. Freud's discovery, the unmasking of one of the great tragic themes of literature, has the effect of releasing a profound and melancholy joke from the depths of the myth. The comedy turns on the point that the object of moral dread is the object of desire, an irony that does not easily lend itself to literary treatment of incest and one that gives little scope to incest as a tragic theme. This is not to say that incest is no longer a tragic theme—it will probably endure as long as the human race—but a writer who makes use of the psychoanalytic insight in a contemporary treatment of the incest theme will find that the insight robs the work of tragic import. An Oedipus, not-knowing, who is drawn to his mother by irresistible external forces, is a tragic figure, but an Oedipus in a contemporary version who reveals the motive of unconscious seeking of the mother has cheated us out of the vital secret, and in giving himself away his tragedy is diminished.

In this respect and others it can be argued that psychoanalysis has inhibited the modern writer to a far greater extent than it has liberated him. The insights of psychoanalysis cannot be ignored by a novelist writing today—but what is to be done with them? A clinical insight does not stir old ghosts in the psyche and bring forth unremembered feelings. On the contrary it behaves like a

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conjurer's trick to put down the ghosts and quiet the turbulence below. (In crude analogy with the therapeutic effects of interpretation.) If a writer wishes to produce the emotional effects of an incestuous conflict he will do much better with the conjuring tricks of his trade than those of the psychoanalyst. If he can conceal and disguise the conflict and smuggle it past the cold clinical eye of the modern reader the story may get through and surprise the unguarded regions of emotion. But if he writes a psychoanalytic version of an incestuous conflict he runs the risk of creating a clinical document.

In the case of the classic incest drama, the tension is sustained through the device of "not knowing," that is innocence of motive. And if *Oedipus Rex* has lost none of its power over a modern audience, even one that "knows" the internal motive, it is because we have entered the dramatist's conspiracy not to know, that we accept for this moment the conventions of both the drama and another time and suspend beliefs that might interfere with enjoyment.

But a psychoanalytic version of Oedipus leaves the writer with no place to hide the motive. The play can't be written without the play-within-the-play and when the motive of unconscious seeking enters the story it has the effect of dissolving the tension. If dread, horror, and shame are the emotional concomitants of incest they are best sustained in a narrative in which the internal motive is concealed. For emotion is reinforced and heightened by the contributions of energy from unconscious sources. It is the unknown danger that raises the intensity of feeling. In the case of incest the unknown danger is the wish, and if a modern writer lays bare the unconscious motive in his narrative he will reduce the intensity of feeling. In this way the identification of motive has the same effect upon the narrative as the interpretation of a dream, i.e., when the motive is brought into consciousness the accompanying effects are diminished.

Even D. H. Lawrence could not extricate himself from this dilemma. All the fine prose and the marvelously wrought flower imagery in *Sons and Lovers* cannot overcome the clinical drabness of the mother-son love. And while Paul's later sufferings and failures in love are given complexity and texture by the device of

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the interlocking theme of mother-son love, once mother-love is given a strong statement in the story Lawrence cannot surprise the emotions, and the tragedy of Paul seems a little commonplace to the modern reader who has ripened on the psychological novel.

All of which brings up another problem in the use of psychoanalytic insight in a literary work. Is the Oedipus complex, the clinical syndrome, material for a tragedy? If we remove ourselves for a moment from our time and our infatuation with mental disease, isn't there something absurd about a hero in a novel who is defeated by his infantile neurosis? I am not making a clinical judgment here, for such personal tragedies are real and are commonplace in the analyst's consulting room, but literature makes a different claim upon our sympathies than tragedy in life. A man in a novel who is defeated in his childhood and condemned by unconscious forces within him to tiredly repeat his earliest failure in love, only makes us a little weary of man; his tragedy seems unworthy and trivial.

Now we can argue that the irresistible fate of Oedipus Rex was nothing more than the irresistible unconscious longings of Oedipus projected outward, but this externalization of unconscious conflict makes all the difference between a story and a clinical case history. We can also argue that the three brothers Karamazov and Smerdyakov were the external representatives of an internal conflict within one man, Dostoevsky, a conflict having to do with father-murder and the wish to possess the father's woman. But a novel in which one man Karamazov explored the divisions within his personality would scarcely merit publication in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*.

It is a mistake to look upon the Oedipus of Oedipus Complex as a literary descendant of Oedipus Rex. Whatever the psychological truth in the Oedipus myth, an Oedipus who is drawn to his fate by irresistible external forces can carry the symbol of humanity and its archaic crime, and the incest that is unknowing renews the mystery of the eternal dream of childhood and absorbs us in the secret. But a modern Oedipus who is doomed because he cannot oppose his own childhood is only pathetic, and for renouncing the mystery in favor of psychological truth he gives up the claim on our sympathies.

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I am suggesting that a case-history approach to the Oedipus complex is a blind alley for a storyteller. The best gifts of the novelist will be wasted on the reader who is insulated against any surprises the novelist may have in store for him. Incest is still a durable theme, but if it wants to get written about it will have to find ways to surprise the emotions, and there is no better way to do this than that of concealment and symbolic representation. And the best way to conceal and disguise the elements of an incest story is not to set out to write an incest story. Which brings to mind another Lawrence story and some interesting comparisons in the treatment of the Oedipal theme.

"The Rocking Horse Winner" is also a story about a boy's love for his mother. If I now risk some comparisons with *Sons and Lovers* let it be clear that I am not comparing the two works or judging their merits; I am only singling out differences in treatment of a theme and the resultant effects. "The Rocking Horse Winner" is a fantasy with extraordinary power to disturb the reader—but we do not know why. It is the story of the hopeless love of a little boy for his cold and vain mother. There are ghostly scenes in which the little boy on his rocking horse rocks madly toward the climax that will magically give him the name of the winning horse. The child grows rich on his winnings and conspires with his uncle to make secret gifts of his money to his mother. The story ends in the child's illness and delirium brought on by the feverish compulsion to ride his horse to win for his mother. The child dies with his mourning mother at his bedside.

I had read the story many times without asking myself why it affected me or caring why it did. But on one occasion when I encountered a similar fantasy in a little boy who was my patient I began to understand the uncanny effects of this story. It was, of course, a little boy's fantasy of winning his mother to himself, and replacing the father who could not give her the things she wanted —a classical oedipal fantasy if you like—but if it were only this the story would be banal. Why does the story affect us? How does the rocking exert its uncanny effect upon the reader? The rocking is actually felt in the story, a terrible and ominous rhythm that prophesies the tragedy. The rocking, I realized, is the single element in the story that carries the erotic message, the unspoken and

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unconscious undercurrent that would mar the innocence of a child's fantasy and disturb the effects of the work if it were made explicit. The rocking has the ambiguous function of keeping the erotic undercurrent silent and making it present; it conceals and yet is suggestive; a perfect symbol. And if we understand the rocking as an erotic symbol we can also see how well it serves as the symbol of impending tragedy. For this love of the boy for his mother is a hopeless and forbidden love, doomed by its nature.

We are also struck by the fact that this story of a boy's love for his mother does not offend, while the incestuous love of the man, Paul Morel, sometimes repels. It's easy to see why. This love belongs to childhood; we accord it its place there, and in Lawrence's treatment we are given the innocent fantasy of a child, in fact, the form in which oedipal love is expressed in childhood. And when the child dies in Lawrence's story in a delirium that is somehow brought on by his mania to win and to make his mother rich, the manifest absurdity of such a disease and such a death does not enter into our thoughts at all. We have so completely entered the child's fantasy that his illness and his death are the plausible and the necessary conclusion.

I am sure that none of the effects of this story were consciously employed by Lawrence to describe an oedipal fantasy in childhood. It is most probable that Freud and the Oedipus complex never entered his head in the writing of this story. He was simply writing a story that wanted to be told, and in the writing a childhood fantasy of his own emerged. He would not have cared why it emerged, he only wanted to capture a memory to play with it again in his imagination and somehow to fix and hold in the story the disturbing emotions that accompanied the fantasy.

In our own time we have seen that the novelist's debt to psychoanalysis has increased but that the novel itself has not profited much from this marriage. Ortega's hope that modern psychology might yet bring forth a last flowering of the novel has only been partially fulfilled. The young writer seems intimidated by psychological knowledge; he has lost confidence in his own eyes and in the validity of his own psychological insights. He borrows the insights of psychology to improve his impaired vision but cannot bring to his work the distinctive vision that should be a novelist'

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own. He has been seduced by the marvels of the unconscious and has lost interest in studying the surfaces of character. If many of the characters in contemporary novels appear to be the bloodless relations of characters in a case history it is because the novelist is often forgetful today that those things that we call character manifest themselves in surface behavior, that the ego is still the executive agency of personality, and that all we know of personality must be discerned through the ego. The novelist who has been badly baptized in psychoanalysis often gives us the impression that since all men must have an Oedipus complex all men must have the same faces.

II.

I have argued that Oedipus of the Oedipus complex has a doubtful future as a tragic figure in literature. But a writer who has a taste for irony and who sees incest in all its modern dimensions can let his imagination work on the disturbing joke in the incest myth, the joke that strikes right at the center of man's humanness. Moral dread is seen as the other face of desire, and here psychoanalysis delivers to the writer a magnificent irony and a moral problem of great complexity.

There is probably some significance in the fact that two of the best incest stories I have encountered in recent years are burlesques of the incest myth. The ancient types are reassembled in gloom and foreboding to be irresistibly drawn to their destinies, but the myth fails before the modern truth; the oracle speaks false and the dream speaks true. In both the farmer's tale in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and in Thomas Mann's *The Holy Sinner,* the incest hero rises above the myth by accepting the wish as motive; the heroic act is the casting off of pretense.

Thomas Mann wrote *The Holy Sinner* in 1951. It was conceived as a leave-taking, a kind of melancholy gathering-in of the myths of the West, *"bevor die Nacht sinkt, eine lange Nacht vielleicht und ein tiefes Vergessen."* He chose a medieval legend of incest, Gregorius vom Stein, and freely borrowed and parodied other myths of the West, mixing themes, language, peoples and times in a master myth in which the old forms continually renew themselves, as in his previous treatment of Joseph.

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But *The Holy Sinner* is not simply a retelling of old stories for an old man's entertainment. Mann understood better than most men the incest comedy at the center of the myth and the psychological truth in which dread is shown as the other face of longing was for him just the kind of deep and complicated joke he liked to tell. And when he retold the legend of Gregorius he interpolated a modern version in which the medieval players speak contemporary thoughts in archaic language; while they move through the pageantry of the ancient incest myth and cover themselves through not-knowing, they reveal the unconscious motive in seeking each other and in the last scene make an extraordinary confession of guilt in the twentieth-century manner.

Grigorss is the child of an incestuous union between a royal brother and sister, the twins Sibylla and Wiligis. He is born in secrecy after the death of his father and cast adrift soon after birth. The infant is discovered by a fisherman who brings him home to rear him. An ivory tablet in the infant's cask recounts the story of his sinful origins and is preserved for the child by the monks of a monastery in the fishing village. Grigorss, at seventeen, learns his story and goes forth as a knight to uncover his origins. His sailing vessel is guided by fate to the shores of his own country at a time when Sibylla's domain is overrun by the armies of one of her rejected suitors. Grigorss overcomes the suitor in battle, delivers the city from its oppressors and marries Sibylla who had fallen in love with the beautiful knight the moment she saw him.

Sibylla is pregnant with their second child when she finds the ivory tablet concealed by her husband, and the identities of mother and son are revealed. Grigorss goes off to do penance on a rock for seventeen years. At the end of this period two pious Christians in Rome receive the revelation which leads them to seek the next Pope on the rock. Grigorss comes to Rome and becomes a great and beloved Pope. In the last pages of the book Sibylla comes to Rome to seek an audience with the great Pope and to give her confession. Mother and son recognize each other and, in Mann's version of this legend, make a remarkable confession of guilt to each other, the confession of unconscious motive and unconscious knowledge of their true identities from the time they had first set eyes on each other.

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Mann allows his story to be told with heavy piety and solemnity by a monk who is at great pains throughout to see that the reader draws the correct moral lesson from this tale. The monk is a windy old bore who deplores and shudders but recounts this history of abominations with an unhurried detailing of events. And all the while he is telling his pious monk's story Mann has teased him into telling a scandalous modern version. For the innocents in this medieval incest tale are our contemporaries in the same way that we are theirs, and as the myth knows many forms and no time, these sinners give the wink to their formal pageantry and, without shifting for a moment the Gothic mask, play Freud's version behind the monk's story, the play within the play.

Sibylla has a dream before giving birth to her son. "She dreamed that she gave birth to a dragon who cruelly tore her womb. Then he flew away, which caused her great mental anguish, but came back again and gave her even greater pain by squeezing back into the torn womb." In the first encounter between Sibylla and the knight Grigorss who has come to deliver her, the mother is stunned by the resemblance of the boy and her brother with whom she sinned. She is also disturbed by the fact that the material of the garment which Grigorss wears is identical with that in which she wrapped her infant son in preparation for his voyage in the tiny cask. With all this—and her old dream of the dragon, too, Sibylla in the monk's tale is unable to draw any conclusions regarding the possible identity of the young knight and finds easy rationalizations for her disturbing thoughts. She is already in love. The monk reflects briefly on this womanish nearsightedness but can make nothing of it.

Behind this ornate and florid monk's tale Mann carries on his burlesque. He allows his incest hero and his mother to know and not know, to carry on the most preposterous self-deceptions and to enjoy their incest to the utmost while subduing their secret knowledge. This is the kind of exquisite joke that Mann is particularly fond of telling, one that he brought to perfection in the lyric wedding night of Jacob and his false bride. The comedy turns on the indifference of Nature to the means by which she attains her end, her disregard for the images of love which she serves, and the conspiracy through which she smuggles her claims at night while

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men protest that it was dark, they were ignorant, and they had been deceived.

In *The Holy Sinner* the ardor of the sinful pair is unspoilt for two years. When a gossipy maid leads Sibylla to the ivory tablet in Grigorss' room, the whole story comes out in the open and the lovers discover their incestuous relationship. The scene of discovery is played in operatic style with shrieks, swoons, and ritual breast-beating. When the noise subsides the incest hero is found racked by bourgeois torments. Now should Sibylla be called "mother" or "aunt"; is their child his wife's grand-daughter, and what is his relationship to his own child? What is he? Grigorss goes off to his rock to do penance and Sibylla humbles herself by caring for lepers.

In Mann's last chapter Sibylla makes a pilgrimage to Rome to confess her sins to the great Pope Gregorius whose fame has spread throughout the world. In the Pope's chambers the old incest comedy is renewed and mother and son resume the pretense of not knowing each other.

Sibylla makes her confession of incest which ends with the most extraordinary confession of all:

> . . . How by the finding of the tablet, she sobbed, the identity of child and spouse had been frightfully revealed and her soul for horror had swounded, but only in play-acting-wise, for on top the soul pretends and makes to-do the diabolical deception practiced on it, but underneath, where truth abides in quietness, the identity had been known at the first glance, and conscious-unconscious she had taken her own child for husband, because again he had been the only one equal in birth. . . .

And the Pope replies:

> Great and extreme, woman, is your sin, and to the very bottom have you confessed it to the Pope. This thoroughness to the uttermost is greater penance than when according to your sin-husband's arrangement you washed the feet of beggars. . . .

The Pope reminds her that however grave the sin, true repentance will bring salvation. And then He makes his confession:

> The measure of the sinfulness . . . is controvertible before God, the more so that thy child in that place where the soul makes no pretense, likewise very well knew that it was his mother whom he loved.

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He brushes aside Sibylla's protests.

. . . A youth who sets out to find his mother and wins by conquest a wife, who, however beautiful, could be his mother, must reckon with it that she might be his mother whom he marries. So much for his understanding. But to his blood the identity of wife and mother was familiar long before he learned the truth and play-acted about it.

The story ends when the Pope and Sibylla drop the last pretense of not knowing and acknowledge that each had recognized the other at first sight in the Pope's chambers and that the time had come to end the play-acting between Pope and penitent—son and mother, to unblind themselves in spite of shame.

The story ends with this extraordinary confession, the confession that Freud forced from this reluctant century. This most durable myth of sin can no longer shelter man from knowledge of his own sinfulness. In Mann's story the Christian ideas of sin and salvation are given a new and imponderable dimension in the last act. Mann's pious monk wants us to believe that it was penance, the most extreme humiliation before God which freed the sinners from their terrible crime. But the Pope speaks clearly for Mann: it is this confession from the depths, the casting off of pretense, that earns them God's mercy.

The monk tells us, too, that "it is wise to divine in the sinner the chosen one, and wise that is too for the sinner himself. For the divining of his chosen state may make him worthy and his sinfulness fruitful so that it bears him up for high flights." This is one of the points in Mann's story where the monk and the modern man traveling in opposite directions pass each other with a flash of recognition, for in modern psychology it is recognized that the aspect of man that is instinctual and may give rise to evil and criminal impulses will also give rise to the highest ideals and social attainments.

Ralph Ellison brings together a Negro Sharecropper and a white philanthropist for the impossible meeting, the meeting which has been postponed until the white man's Judgment Day. It is the meeting that reveals the motive in the white man's abhorrence

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of the Negro, the black sin which is cast out in dread and loathing and rediscovered in a black brother with dread and loathing. The sin is, of course, incest, and the impossible meeting is the confrontation of the white man with his sinful motive. The meeting is envisioned by Ellison with superb wit.

Mr. Norton, the white philanthropist, appears in the early part of the novel as the distinguished visitor to the campus of a southern Negro college. The narrator, then a student, is appointed chauffeur to Mr. Norton during his visit and unwittingly steers him to the fateful meeting with the farmer, Trueblood. Mr. Norton has dedicated his life to the improvement of the Negro. His work is a monument to his dead daughter, and he speaks lyrically of her beauty, her purity and her goodness. His love for his daughter and his good works for the Negro are the two sustaining forces of his life. We do not understand yet how they are connected.

Mr. Norton has an extraordinary introduction to Mr. Trueblood, the Negro sharecropper of local fame, who has impregnated both his daughter and his wife. In fascinated horror Mr. Norton confronts the sharecropper.

"Is it true . . . I mean did you"?

"Suh?" Trueblood asked . . .

. . . "You have survived," he blurted. "But is it true . . .?"

"*Suh?*" the farmer said, his brow wrinkling with bewilderment. . . .

. . . "You did and you are unharmed!" he shouted, his blue eyes blazing into the black face with something like envy and indignation. . . .

"You have looked upon chaos and are not destroyed!"

"No suh! I feels all right."

"You do? You feel no inner turmoil, no need to cast out the offending eye?"

"*Suh?*"

"Answer me!"

"I'm all right, suh," Trueblood said uneasily. "My eyes is all right too. And when I feels po'ly in my gut I takes a little soda and it goes away."

Trueblood is urged to tell his tale.

One night in the crowded family bed of the sharecropper's cabin Trueblood lay next to his grown daughter and found him-

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self in a dream. It was a distorted dream of intercourse in which the dreamer finds himself in a white man's house in the bedroom of a white lady. There follows a nightmare sequence in which the dreamer tries to escape from the embrace of the white woman and flees through the door of a grandfather clock, running with pounding heart through a hot, dark tunnel.

When the dreamer wakens he finds himself on top of his daughter in a sexual embrace. It is the moment before the climax. And here is the farmer's dilemma: If he moves to withdraw he will sin. If he stays he will sin. He cannot act without moving and he cannot move without sinning. Trueblood (urged on by his daughter) stays to sin.

Now the farmer's wife, Kate, is aroused and goes mad with horror and revulsion. Kate, posing as God's wrathful instrument, grabs an axe and brings it down upon her husband who lies hypnotized before this terrible judgment. But at the last minute he cannot bring himself to submit to the axe and turns his head to one side. The axe strikes the side of his face. Kate, ready to strike again, poises the axe and then Trueblood sees it stop, "like somebody done reached down through the roof and caught it." The axe falls behind her at this time, and Kate stumbles out the back door and vomits.

Trueblood leaves his home and, following the myth, becomes a wanderer shunned by all men. In exile he ponders his guilt. Did he sin or didn't he sin? Is a man responsible for his dreams? Trueblood does not appeal to God for a judgment, and God remains silent during Trueblood's exile. A man of a more philosophical turn of mind might have spent the rest of his life wandering in the wilderness pondering his guilt. But Trueblood is a practical man. When he finds that he cannot know his crime or his guilt, he accepts the impossibility of knowing and sees the absurdity of his exile for an unjudged crime. He decides to return to his family.

At this point Trueblood breaks with the myth. And from that moment the myth collapses, all the actors in the ancient pageant lose their lines, and the myth goes off on a lunatic rampage reversing its prophecy. Trueblood returns to his family and his sin bring him undreamed-of prosperity.

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Trueblood becomes an embarrassed hero, a contemporary marvel for his white neighbors, the man who committed the blackest sin and lived to tell the tale. The white folks come to visit him and hear his story, the plain white folks who are his neighbors and educated white folks from the university who write articles about him. They pay him well for his story and take good care of him and his family. Trueblood and his pregnant daughter and his pregnant wife are perversely rewarded for sin.

The argument is subtle, here. Mr. Ellison does not consider incest a laughing matter, of course. But he understands that the inmost core of the incest myth contains a grotesque comedy, the comedy of knowing-not knowing. He has expertly brought off the bitter joke that Mr. Trueblood's dream-sin is the white man's dream-sin and that Trueblood is rewarded for offering himself as a symbol and taking the white man's sin on himself.

Ellison's tale is marvelously contrived to state the dilemma of the man of our times who can no longer hide behind the myth. He has written a kind of incest comedy in which moral dread is exposed as the other face of desire, but in this treatment he reveals an irony of such magnitude that the ancient myth acquires a new dimension as tragedy. As in the classical model the tragedy proceeds through its inevitable phases by means of the device of "not knowing," but "not knowing" in this modern incest tale is a species of self-deception, the denial of the sinful motive in the unconscious.

There are two incest heroes in Ellison's story—or one, if you like—for Mr. Trueblood is Mr. Norton's brother of the dream, his black self. Mr. Norton who listens to Mr. Trueblood's dream with dread and fascination is the witness to his own dream. Mr. Norton's dream-sin of incest is concealed from him and from the world. He atones by creating monuments to the sacred memory of his daughter, and his good works for the Negro are the symbols of his guilty partnership with the Negro: the Negro sins for Mr. Norton and Mr. Norton atones. Mr. Trueblood who sinned in a dream and wakened to find himself embracing his daughter is stripped of pretense and the protection of the myth. He is confronted with his naked self and the testimony of his dream and the act. He can still take refuge in the myth by submitting to

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the classical fate; for an instant he offered himself to the axe and then refused; for a short time he exiled himself but chose to come back. He became a hero because he refused to hide behind the cowardly deceptions that cloak sin; he faced the truth within himself. In this way Trueblood rose above the myth and escaped the tragic consequences. He reverses the classic fate of the incest hero. Instead of an Oedipus blinded we are given an Oedipus newly sighted.

Norton is Oedipus blinded in this story, for when he is confronted with Trueblood's dream-sin, which is his own, he refuses to see and is carried from the scene unconscious. In one of the funniest and saddest chapters of the story, the unconscious Mr. Norton is carried off to a whorehouse frequented by the Negro inmates of a local insane asylum and lies serenely unconscious in the midst of brawling and whoring while the lunatics speak unquieting truths about the white man's sickness and the black man's sickness. They are not heard, and when Norton is revived by a lucid madman (once a prominent Negro psychiatrist) everyone works quickly to put Mr. Norton together again, to shore up the fictions and pretenses, to tell him what he wants to hear and show him what he wants to see. The young Negro student who had unwittingly led Mr. Norton to the sharecropper's cabin is hastily expelled by his college for his part in bringing about the impossible meeting.

Did Mr. Trueblood sin? Mr. Ellison puts the moral problem with great delicacy and sees it in all its complexity. Is a man morally responsible for his dream? This is undoubtedly one of the most bothersome questions to emerge with Freudian psychology. Freud himself addressed himself to the problem in a little known and rarely remembered essay called "Moral Responsibility in Dreaming." Freud says "yes," and such is the confusion generated by psychoanalysis that nobody remembers that Freud himself gave cold comfort to the dream-sinners, that conscious-unconscious a man cannot escape moral responsibility; he alone is the inventor of his dream.

Trueblood, the modern incest hero, is obliged to judge his own case and cannot find the verdict. He is guilty-not-guilty in the uncertain class of modern criminals still waiting judgment

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with Joseph K. But he is not afflicted with their disease; he does not torment himself with unanswerable questions, and he cannot bring himself to atone for a crime that cannot be judged. There are no heroes in Joseph K.'s courtroom. K. submitted to the knife and others are consumed by their disease. But Trueblood became a hero because he refused the refuge of mind-sickness, and his manhood refused the axe. He did not bargain with God in the wilderness, but fairly judged his own worthiness to live and manfully returned to his living.

Now of course Ellison is not writing a case for incest. Mr. Trueblood's prosperity is a bitter joke, and to understand the joke in all its complexity we need to study the conduct of God, Himself, during this case. For it strikes us that God showed a considerable disregard for the conventions of the incest tale. His judgment appears to be far more lenient than that of Trueblood's human judges. He stayed the hand of Kate Trueblood when she brought the axe down the second time and was satisfied that the sinner should bear his judgment in the unhealing sore, the mark of the axe's first blow. When Kate, posing as God's wrathful instrument, demanded the sacrifice of Trueblood's manhood, God gave no sign when the axe descended for its first blow and seemed to wait for the sign from Trueblood. Trueblood's instinctive turning aside was the affirmation of his manhood, and God, approving, stayed the hand of Kate when she was about to bring the axe down for the second blow.

When Trueblood goes forth into the wilderness we are given no sign as to God's intentions. The myth supports the interpretation that God looks favorably upon wandering in the wilderness for crimes of various classes, but when Trueblood decides to go home and face his crime and assume his masculine prerogatives, God approves and rewards him by causing him to prosper. This suggests to me that God is sick of naked and sightless fools wandering in the wilderness and that any man who wants to go home and face up to things may get His blessings.

Both Mann and Ellison have created in their incest tales a heroic image of man that is entirely modern—"Freudian," if you like—a man who rises above the myth by acknowledging the unconscious motive. Both Grigorss and Trueblood refuse the refuge

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of the myth, the refuge of "not knowing," and by undeceiving themselves they reverse the prophecy. We are left to conclude that it is the myth that destroys and that the heroic act for modern man is the casting off of pretense.

There is even the strong suggestion in *The Holy Sinner* that the unmasking of sinful motives by psychoanalysis may initiate a new progress in the moral evolution of mankind in which the "know thyself" of psychoanalysis will bring moral wisdom in place of moral tyranny.

When Grigorss was found by the searchers after seventeen years of penance on the rock, he had lost his human form and had shrunk to the size of a small animal. The animal had protected itself against hunger and the assaults of weather by periods of long hibernation. After receiving the messengers Grigorss assumed his human form, and with his new birth came new wisdom. The new-born man, the Pope, was the man who had learned that he had carried his sin within himself in the form of a wish, that he had deceived himself in order to satisfy his longing. And it was this "confession from the depths" that freed him and restored him to human stature.

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THEATER CHRONICLE

JEAN GENET, WHITE AND BLACK

Jean Genet has defined his play, *Les Nègres,** as a *clownerie*. It is a free improvisation on the theme of the relations between blacks and whites. The true action concerns the contrast between the two kinds of men. Stanislavski would have described it by saying: "To discover what a Negro is." What's more, the text by its very nature demands that it be acted: if it were reduced to the written word, something essential would be missing, which is that it constitutes the plot of an action to be performed above all before an audience. And the action to be performed is the contrast between blacks and whites. So what is at stake is theater conceived truly as such. In fact, even if Genet has never read Pirandello, *Les Nègres* is the happiest example of the resumption and continuation of the form of theater initiated by Pirandello with *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and prolonged by him (in a manner which, however, was uncertain, since too programmatic) in such plays as *Tonight We Improvise* and *Each In His Own Way.*

As so often with inspired inventors, after *Six Characters* Pirandello became a prisoner of his own invention: he understood it as an ideology and employed it as a technique. He did not realize that what he had discovered was not so much a way of making scenically apparent the illusion-reality dialectic as a path for returning the dramatic situation and the theater to their original freedom. Indeed, in the modern theater, this freedom was regained when Ibsen put in question the morality of the comedy which the individual acts out in order to adapt himself to society. In Pirandello, what is in question is the very reality of the role that the individual realistically acts out in everyday life; at the end what one discovers is that one cannot avoid

* Nicola Chiaromonte's remarks are based on the Paris production.

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playing a part in the comedy, and so the theater begins with the comedy which the individual plays in relation to himself, with the dialogue which the individual must necessarily and continuously carry on with himself as to the *truth* of the role which he finds that he must act in relation to the others. That is, the theater begins in the intimate depths of self-awareness. Man is an essentially theatrical being. Thus the theater must represent this fact: the relationship between action and self-consciousness. The illusion of reality, the versimilitude of the plot, have no importance at all: what matters is the truth of the initial situation and the logic with which it is pushed to its ultimate consequences. The dramatic action is not a fiction which one pretends to be true, but a truth which openly pretends to be a pretense. This, in substance, is Pirandello's point of arrival. As a consequence, with him the theater has again become what it was at its inception: a free space in which one plays at putting in question the meaning of human actions. Provided that the play of forces is explicit, freedom is complete. Thus the naturalistic and moralistic approach is fatal to the theater; it prevents it from being a game, that is, of freely telling the truth.

As Jean-Paul Sartre has shown, Genet's existential situation is that of the "play-actor" forced to act out the comedy of Evil. Only by exposing himself to the condemnation of "normal" people, that is, of exacerbating in his imagination his role as a criminal and invert, can he feel himself to be "real." But precisely because of this, he ends up by feeling himself to be the victim of an unjust judgment, he pretends to be innocent and so is ensnared in the very problem of Good and Evil which he wanted to escape. So he must go back to playing the role of the depraved man in the impenetrable world of Evil, go back to wanting to awaken in us the nausea and condemnation by which, since they are false and unjust, he feels himself justified. In other words, he goes back to feigning that innocence which he cannot accept.

This, according to Sartre, is the play-acting in which Genet is condemned to remain imprisoned. But the play-acting is real. Genet sacrifices himself in it. He is therefore not only a "play-actor," but also a "martyr" and a "saint." For Sartre, Genet's

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sanctity rests in the fact that he shows contemporary man where the ethical problem begins and what it is made up of. In consequence, Sartre invites us to "put Genet to good use," just as Pascal invited the Christian to make good use of his illnesses.

In Genet's theater, that is, in *Les Bonnes* and *Haute Surveillance,* Sartre saw the continuation, and the exacerbation of the play-acting which Genet acts out in his novels. He regarded the theatrical situations and characters as disguises for Genet himself, in which the author pushes the unreality of his situation to the point of schizophrenia, without being able to escape from it. Yet one can ask whether Sartre would say the same thing about *Le Balcon* and *Les Nègres.* Indeed, it seems that in the latter play the situation has changed and that, without denying himself, by the simple fact of making theater, that is, of presenting himself *authentically in a disguise in relation to the others,* Genet issues miraculously out of his nightmare, giving objective, no longer schizophrenic, form to the situation that fascinates him. In short, through the theater Genet seems to have succeeded in making good use of Genet.

Les Nègres begins with the author's warning: "This play, written by a white man, is intended for a white audience, but if it is ever performed before a black audience, which is quite improbable, then a white person, male or female, should be invited to each performance. The producer of the play should solemnly welcome this white, dress him in a ceremonial costume and lead him to his seat, preferably in the center of the first row of the orchestra. A spotlight should be focused upon this symbolic white throughout the play. And what if no white person accepts the invitation? Then it would be necessary to distribute white masks to the black spectators as they enter the theater."

This is the "prologue" and it explains clearly the intention of this *clownerie*: to place an audience of whites in the position of feeling itself judged, derided, attacked by a company of blacks. The whites are the spectators and the blacks are the actors. In consequence, the judgment, the derision, the aggression, are fictitious, part of a game, a diversion, a vacation from reality, and are to be taken as such; exactly as in the Greek festival of the

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Anthesteria or in the medieval Carnival, with its broad jests and diatribes of men with whitened faces or wearing masks. But, accepted as fiction, the judgment, the derision, the insults become real—they are accepted as true judgment, true derision, true insult. If, in any case, the spectator, within himself or by obvious signs, reacts to them as to a real offense, then he breaks up the game and places himself in the wrong. If, on the other hand, he pretends to regard them as fictitious, unreal, inconsequential, he finds himself in a state of hypocrisy. He can do nothing but play along accepting those words and gestures as true, and searching in himself for the *correct* retort; that is, participating unreservedly in the theatrical ceremony.

The blacks are the actors. One of them, the Coryphée, explains this after the company, dancing to the rhythm of a Mozart minuet, has started the performance. But the actors are real Negroes. The performance that they offer to the whites is a kind of alibi to conceal something which is taking place off-stage: a conspiracy, a betrayal, which threatens them and which in the end they will succeed in foiling by killing the betrayer (also off-stage). This, too, is a fiction, but, since it refers to the reality of their revolt, it renders the play doubly unreal, making of it a dubious and sinister game. The presence of the Negro behind the actor is rendered explicit, the scenic fiction is exposed as an illusion and an escape from a real, intolerable and insoluble situation. In sum, the real truth is also on stage.

At this point Genet's goal is attained—we are truly in the theater. Not in the theater of Dionysius, or in that of a court, or in the orchestra of a bourgeois theater, but at the theater's very origins: from one moment to the next the theatrical fiction is transformed from a festive ritual into a liberating institution which has as its norm the "game of truth" accepted by the whole community. It is a moment of complete freedom. The actors (and with them the playwright) are free to say everything, in the faith that their words will be accepted as true: directed not to the fictitious individual who pretends to adhere to the mask which he carries in life and to take it seriously, but, beyond the mask, to the real individual: to his awareness,

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necessarily divided and doubt-ridden, and thus open to the influence of the truth. At the same time the spectators are free to welcome the most disturbing revelations, conscious that they are not being made in order to wound but rather to awaken their most living side. Is this not the sense in which one must understand the Artistotelian catharsis, which instead is usually understood as a kind of drowning of the real in the imaginary?

The path by which Genet attains this point can seem a play of mirrors; and so it is. But it is a mirror-play on which the theater is naturally founded, rendered explicit for the purpose of overcoming *with theatrical means* the inertia of nineteenth-century convention. In any case, the play never gives an impression of artifice and the over-all effect is of a simplicity which I do not hesitate to call moving.

To tell the story of *Les Nègres* is impossible: the text cannot be separated from its performance, and this is just as much due to the stage direction of Roger Blin, the costumes and masks of André Acquart, the enchanting brio of the actors of the Compagnie des Griots, as to Genet's fantasy and humor. Without Roger Blin and without the extraordinary naturalness of the actors, Genet's often too charged and needlessly violent style would mar the grace of the invention and scenic movement. The action, summarized, comes down to this: a group of black actors expresses, before an audience of whites, the relationship between blacks and whites as they themselves see it and suffer it. There are the blacks below, and above, on a platform, the Governor, the Bishop, the Judge, the Servant and the Queen—all whites, or rather, blacks wearing masks. The blacks comment on their ceremony (pretended), which consists in the ritual sacrifice of a white woman. Behind this ceremony lies the secret of the conspiracy. From this intial fact there burst—precisely in the same way that a jazz orchestra improvises—dances, duets of love and jealousy, lyrical exaltation, sarcastic remarks, farcical scenes. At the end the revolt, ridiculous and ferocious, explodes, at the conclusion of which the "whites" are one after the other put to death. Therefore the "blacks" have taken the place of the "whites." An impossible conclusion, or, to put it more accurately,

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possible only in fiction: in reality the confrontation, the judgment and the revolt never come to an end. The Coryphée's final observation is: *"Nous sommes ce qu'on veut que nous soyons, et nous le serons jusqu'au bout, absurdément."*

Of course, *Les Nègres* is not a play against colonialism or racism. The crucial speech in this *clownerie* is: *"Si sa souffrance est trop forte, qu'il se repose sur la parole."* This is what Genet has let his Negroes do: entrust themselves to the word in order to confess by making fun of their own natures and, through the confession, judging and exposing themselves to judgment. Beneath the mirror-play and the buffoonery there is a genuine moral dialectic: the tormenting dialetic of judgment to which existence amidst the others, if suffered from within, is reduced. What counts is the fantasy which, thanks to this mirror-game, is released and takes shape, or, in other words, the acute awareness of existential loneliness and, at the same time, of the look of the others out of which is born, in Jean Genet, the act of "play acting."

With this play, *Les Nègres,* in a manner theatrically even more persuasive than in *Le Balcon,* Genet gives us today a unique example of what it means to throw oneself into a scenic situation so as to draw out of it all that it can possibly give, unconcerned about anything but the poetry of that situation and its theatrical shape. What strikes one is the great freedom and lightness of the invention, when compared to the obsessive heaviness, frightfully shut up in itself, of Genet the novelist. The theater, so it seems, is the means through which the damned Genet achieves redemption. Redemption from what? From the mire of the real, from the obsession of real experience, from the obstinacy of the outcast immured in his own biography, determined to nourish himself on the condemnation by the others, without being able to respond to this condemnation save by again and again proclaiming himself criminal and perverted, segregated in Evil, and thus beyond the reach of the condemnation of the others. Yet by the simple act of stepping on the stage and entering the theatrical game, there appears the possibility of a judgment without condemnation—objective, since purely thought through—and, with this,

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imaginative freedom. The novel was a prison which locked Genet in a narcissistic obsession. The theater opens him naturally to the world and to the love of the others.

In fact, *Les Nègres* is as a whole an act of poetic love. For the blacks, of course; but, through the blacks, for outcasts of every kind; and through the outcasts, simply for *the others,* the persons different from us, the unreachable and incomprehensible "others"—just as they are, with their deformities, their passions, their impenetrable sorrow, with the incalculable distance that separates them from us and the infinite resemblance that ties them to all of us. *Les Nègres* is a moving play.

Nicola Chiaromonte

(Translated from the Italian by Raymond Rosenthal)

"A GRIPPING DRAMA"
—Taubman, Times

A FAR COUNTRY

MUSIC BOX W. 45th St. Mats. Wed. & Sat.

"SHINES & SPARKLES"
—Crist, Her. Trib.

MARY, MARY

HELEN HAYES W. 46th St. Mats. Wed. & Sat.

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THE EDUCATION OF A QUEEN

(*Continued from page* 573)

"Which? Which?" cried poor Joshua.

"Oh—that one, I guess." It was written all over her face: well, so you're a nut after all; I'm not going to have any nuts in *my* box, thank you!

But Joshua wasn't looking; if he had been I think even he would have understood. Instead, he said with great excitement and satisfaction: "Well, if you *really* like them and don't *mind,* of course, I'll make you one, too."

"Oh, thanks a million!"

"Unless of course you'd rather have *this* one . . ."

"Oh no, no! Thanks *ever.*"

"I'm glad," said Joshua simply. "I would rather make one just for you and give it to you myself." He looked her straight in her black tip-tilted eyes, without a trace of childishness or evasive flirting. His money was plumped there on the line and she could take or leave it. Do I get my ticket or don't I?

Vasiliki's gaze actually fell; she pursed her lips, swiveled on her spike heels and marched off upstairs with her adorable rump switching and her eyes bent thoughtfully on the carpeting.

I was sweating with repressed laughter and nerves. I raced after her, ahead of Joshua and Mother, and confronted her in the parlor.

"What are you going to do?"

She gave me a long, calculating look. "Daphne, what about him? Is he . . .?"

I stopped being twelve and became a hundred. "*Well . . .*" I smiled compassionately.

Suddenly she slipped her arm around my waist and gave me a tight squeeze. "Daphne, you're *marv!* Why don't we have a regular hen-fest one of these days? We could go to the movies on my free pass and then to Prince Castle after. I *love* Prince Castle, with all that glop they put on top!"

Joshua came into the room. "Who's this prince you love? I'll take him on right now."

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"It's like an ice cream parlor," Vasiliki said, with the faintest trace of stiffness.

"I'll take you there myself."

He's jealous of me, I thought. I could have wept to see things so turned around. But he had seen my face fall, for he walked right over and rubbed his nose in my hair—the tenderest gesture he had ever made toward me. "Don't cry, Betty Boop! You'll get your ice cream sundae; never fear."

I burst into tears and ran out of the room.

The next afternoon as I came in from school, the phone rang: Vasiliki inviting me to see *Stella Dallas* and go for a sundae afterwards.

I had to ask Mother. "I think that would be *nice,*" she said, rolling out cookie dough. "I guess she's interested in Joshua, after all."

I'll fix that, I thought to myself and dashed back to set the time.

I didn't actually tell any lies behind the white tiled turrets of Prince Castle; I simply let her convince herself of what she already wanted to believe.

"He's really off his rocker, isn't he?"

I blinked.

"Why do your mother and father let him hang around, then?"

I shrugged.

"I don't see how you can stand it," she said, sticking out her tongue to lick her cherry. I proferred her mine, on my spoon.

"Don't ever do that with a fellow, Daphne."

"Why not?"

She stared. Then she hissed, with her face in mine, *"Cherry!* Get it?"

"No. I don't like maraschino cherries; I don't see why I shouldn't give them to somebody who does."

"You *are* a dope. Cherry is what you've got here," gesturing toward her lap with her spoon. "Virginity. Get it?"

"Oh." I thought of all the times Joshua had taken me out for ice cream and gobbled up my cherries greedily. Probably he'd been mocking me all the time. I hated him for it. "What will you do with that box Joshua's going to make for you?"

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"Turn him in."

I really don't think I heard her at first. I went on destroying my Double Chocolate Delight until gradually the whipped cream began tasting like cheese. I laid down my spoon.

"What did you say?"

"*I'm* not taking any chances."

"You wouldn't!"

"Oh but definitely! He's probably a sexual pervert or something."

"But he hasn't done anything—"

"How do you know? You don't know anything about him before he came to live with you. All you know is he's from Sioux Falls or someplace. He might be a rapist, even." She paused. "You know, I'll bet he's an Indian."

"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. Sioux Falls or something. *I* wouldn't let an Indian sleep in my parlor. That's why I don't understand your folks—"

"You're *prejudiced!*" I cried hotly, my voice echoing from the damp, tiled walls, reeking of warm milk and sugar.

She eyed me haughtily. "I don't discuss politics, myself."

I went home feeling sick in my soul and my stomach. I wanted to tell my parents what Vasiliki had said, but they were out. Jason was in bed though awake, of course, the little snoop. I went in and asked him where Joshua was.

"He's in the basement making a box for Vasiliki. Ooo! Lovey-dovey!" Then he began to sing, "Daphne lu-uvs Josh-wa! Daphne lu-uvs Josh-wa!"

I was terrified that Joshua might hear him down the hot-air register, so I snapped, "Shut up or I'll lock your door."

He subsided at once, and I went into the bathroom. I wanted to go right down to warn Joshua but I was afraid of three things. One. That Jason might hear me and set up that yodel again. Two. That Joshua had already heard Jason and now knew my secret shame. Three. That I was going to be horribly sick to my stomach.

I threw up everything: Double Chocolate Delight complete

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with whipped cream, malt-balls from the movies, supper's lamb chop, even the salted peanuts I'd nibbled after school.

Then I went to bed and cried for a long time.

Eventually I heard Joshua trudge upstairs. He went into the parlor, opened the coat closet door, shut it again, and came back, poking his head in at my door.

"Daphne?"

I considered a moment and then murmured, "Mm-m—"

"I'm going out for a breath of air. Your folks should be home soon. You scared to stay alone?"

"No." This was a lie.

"I won't go far."

"OK."

"Goodnight, Betty Boop."

Now is the time. Now—now! Call him in before he gets to the kitchen, before his step crosses the threshold, before he shuts the back door. Sit him on the foot of your bed. Tell him everything in a rush, no matter how it sounds. He is your Joshua and he is in danger.

Instead I sulked silently, listening to his steps crunch down the cinder drive, because in my hideous self-consciousness I was afraid I smelled sour from the vomit and because I was even more afraid of his disbelief. He was crazy—and he was crazy about that piece of fake exoticism, Vasiliki; he wouldn't believe me. He would think I was mean and jealous and he would never call me "Betty Boop" again.

In addition, there lingered a fantastic apprehension at the back of my memory. Maybe Vasiliki was right. We knew very little about him, after all. He had said *for a breath of air,* but what if he meant something else? I shivered and wriggled farther under the covers.

Some time later my parents came home. They were arguing as they walked up the drive, and I heard them step into the basement, probably just for a look, and then come upstairs, still arguing. Briefly they were silent while my mother trotted into the parlor and quickly returned toward the kitchen, gently closing Jason's door and mine on the way.

I knew they wanted to be alone to argue so I did not summon

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them in to hear my troubles. Instead, I got up and quietly opened my door to listen. I heard my father say,

"You're up to your old tricks—you want to limit my freedom."

"We must all learn to live within limits," said my mother.

"Man is born free. Woman enslaves him!" He began pacing up and down the kitchen.

"Nonsense!" snapped my mother. Then she murmured something I couldn't catch.

"Look," he said, "if you want another child, I'll give you one. We can't really afford it but times are bound to get better. I'll give you a great, big, walloping belly, and then . . ."

"And then," said my mother in a voice suddenly as lean as bone, "you'll go chasing after the first pig in skirts you see. No, *thank* you. I've served my term. No more having my husband fall all over me *simply* because the mindless slut he slept with couldn't satisfy him."

I could have thought another woman had spoken, the words were so strange. She stopped and I could hear her panting sharply with anger. But when she spoke again it was in a very different voice. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said those things. Only once in a while I allow myself to feel bitter—I lose control . . ."

"You've made it quite clear what you think already," my father said with a sound of stiff and terrible pride.

"No," my mother said. "No.—That's only part of it."

I closed the door and slipped back into bed. I was trembling with disgust but I was puzzled, too. What did she mean, *only part of it?* Then, quite simply, the way children do, I decided to forget the whole discussion. Mother was Mother. My father was "difficult" (Mother's word) but he was "terrific," "awfully smart," and "loads of fun," too, and though I wasn't then capable of loving him, I certainly worshiped him, and the notion of any other father would have been heresy.

The next morning I went in to breakfast fully determined to make my confession to Joshua, but the sight of his red, red mouth—too red no matter what the weather—made me think of that breath of air, and I turned mute in adolescent alarm and jealousy. The more he tried to wheedle out of me what the matter was, the more I shunned him.

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But that evening when he was again in the basement working, I pricked and poked up my courage and went downstairs. He was fitting a gate made out of green pipestems into a long, wooden box—Vasiliki's.

"Why did you make it green?"

"Why not?" Then, afraid perhaps that he'd been too brusque with his pet, he looked up and smiled with extraordinary sweetness. It shredded to bits my puerile soul, and I could hardly bear the thought of letting him down by telling him the truth.

"What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to put *her—here.*" He pointed with one hand to a space behind the gate and with the other he picked up and held aloft my—*my* little porcelain mermaid.

I gave an involuntary cry. "You can't!"

"Why not?"

There she was, darling and white and nude with little softly-rounded, pink-tipped breasts. Once long long ago she had reclined, exquisitely languid, on the sandy sea-bottom of somebody's goldfish bowl. Then oh bliss she had lost an arm (Madame Recamier undergoes surgery) and been given me for my dollhouse. I never played with it anymore of course, but the notion of giving her to Vasiliki—try to imagine this gnashing agony. The night-brown walls of the basement turn a sickly mud-yellow with the approaching hurricane. I could kill. In an instant. In the despotic obliquity of youth I perceive that I, who merit all rewards *by right,* am losing one of my possessions to a cook's spawn.

I almost spit. "She's mine!"

"Funny. I found her here on the table. Jason or your mother must have . . . Never mind; it doesn't matter. Here, sweetheart, take her back. You're my best girl of all." Then he utters the ultimate misfortune. "I'll find something better for her."

I was dumb with bitterness and shame. I stumbled back upstairs, clutching my one-armed mermaid, so long outgrown, so much a part of my myriad inadequacies.

What happened during the next two days I have to reconstruct from what my mother has told me.

During the night Joshua must have finished Vasiliki's box. What it looked like in its final form only Mother knew, for she

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was the only one of us to see it and she recalls a nude female figure of some kind. He was still at his job when I came home from school, and I ran eagerly across the street to call on Aggie, with whom I hadn't played for at least two months. We retired to the ping-pong table in the depths of her basement, and I let her win game after game—anything to avoid going home. At six o'clock her mother, in a rare good humor, invited me to stay for supper, and I eagerly accepted after sending Aggie back across the street to ask permission of Mother.

At seven-thirty Aggie and I wandered upstairs to her bedroom "to read library books" (Aggie read the comics). Meanwhile, Joshua cleaned himself up, put on his *other* suit, wrapped the precious box in tissue dug up somewhere by Mother, and departed to seek out Vasiliki in her cashier's box, longer than a coffin but not much wider. He hadn't called for a date, but he told Mother it didn't matter for he knew her schedule. Mother said he was perfectly at ease.

I am sure it never occurred to Joshua that Vasiliki might laugh; worse yet, might disapprove, be afraid. Why should it? We had adopted and protected him, surrounding him like a wall with our family, our love, our broad shoulders. My mother accepted his boxes as an honor and showed them to all her friends—not because she understood or even liked them, but because she loved Joshua. He can hardly be blamed for not knowing all this.

At eight o'clock my father went off to a professional meeting, and at eight-thirty while I was still buried in *The Red Fairy Book* in Aggie's bedroom, two policemen called at our house and demanded to see the "pornography" in the basement. It was a great pity my father wasn't at home then. Though he seldom handled criminal cases, he was known and respected down at City Hall, and I dare say that with a phone call he could have sent them away, at least temporarily. As it was, they put a large number of "exhibits" in the police-car and drove away, shaking their heads over "the crazy guy."

My mother finally managed to reach my father at his meeting, and he went rampaging over to the police station, bailed out Joshua, and brought him home. He did not think, however, to

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check on the fate of all those "exhibits," and Joshua didn't know about them.

Mother said Joshua looked very queer when he arrived back from the police station. She said he looked the way he did four months before when my father first dragged him home to supper. She saw to it that he didn't go down to the basement but gave him a sedative with orange juice (Mother didn't really approve of sedatives and thought that swallowing them with the aid of orange juice somehow made them morally acceptable), and sent him to bed on the parlor couch. When I slunk in—at ten o'clock, unheard of during the week—all she said was,

"Oh, where have *you* been?" And then, "What a time we've had!" And shut me in the kitchen with her to tell me all. I sat there on the hospital-white kitchen stool, utterly condemned by myself, but I felt it would be even worse to confess.

Joshua slept through breakfast, and Mother phoned his job to say he was sick and not coming in that day. I took one peek at him, lying there in his faded pajamas like a pauper on his slab, before running off to school and I have never been able really to gloze over that memory. I think right then I died a little without knowing that was what I was doing. I walked to school abstractedly and on the way I decided that "it would be better to forget about it." And by virtue of a prodigious effort I really forgot him off and on during the day.

While I was working at forgetting, my father went to see Vasiliki and quickly persuaded her to drop the case. She appeared eager to talk to him and took both his scolding and advice without a murmur. She said she had been "frightened" and mistaken," and she cried "pathetically" (his word) on his shoulder. For a lawyer he could occasionally be fairly obtuse. They drove together to the police station, and my father asked for the boxes. The harassed sergeant, glad to make an end of the matter, said he would send them to the house in a patrol wagon. My father then went to his office.

By the time Joshua waked, my mother was able to tell him that everything was all right. He washed, shaved, and ate a good breakfast; he seemed cheerful enough, Mother said, though per-

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haps still a trifle groggy from the sedative. Then he went into the parlor to watch for the patrol wagon.

When it still had not come at noon Mother telephoned the police station. The sergeant was polite but brief: obviously he had had his fill of this case. One of his men had thrown them boxes in the incinerator, thinking they was just trash. Sorry. Mother shut the kitchen door and phoned my father at his office. I don't know what they agreed to say to Joshua, but whatever it was, wasn't enough.

He listened calmly, "only," Mother said, "tilting his head at me a little and going rather paler, *if* possible . . ." Then he left "without his coat." This fact correctly struck her as ominous, and she waited for him in great apprehension the rest of the day, not even going out into the back yard for fear of missing the telephone.

When I came home from school at three-thirty, there still hadn't been word from or about him. I wandered down to the basement, regarded the dismal scrap-heap left behind by the invading policemen, and then I recalled my new resolution to forget it all. I went across the street again to Aggie's, but she was being punished by her mother, so I took a long walk up the railroad tracks toward the country.

At dusk I ambled home to find Mother and Jason crying in the kitchen. Joshua, they said, was in the state hospital. At four he had appeared with a form for Mother to sign, admitting him for treatment. His family was dead; she must sign. In desperation she telephoned my father, and together they stormed at, argued and pleaded with Joshua. Finally, gravely, he rolls up his cuffs to show them the slightly twisted, delicate white twine scarring his skinny wrists.

This scene I have always found it impossible to visualize. My father and mother are real: they cough and move. But there is Joshua, displaying the emblems of his martyrdom as sedately as a saint. Like a schoolteacher he points to the blackboard—no! I can't see him. Once upon a time he had cut his wrists, that's all. He was my Joshua and I done him wrong deliberately and with hatred in my heart. Joshua, I summon you. I resurrect your fleshless narrow delicate most beautiful blanched cutting bones! When did you slash your wrists? Why? *You never told me.*

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I was twelve. No one told me much of anything I wanted to know. My father drove Joshua to the hospital and returned, silent with gloom, to his law books. I hung about his study door. Back and forth. Aimlessly pawing the threshold.

"Whatever—why—what do you think . . .?"

I couldn't get it out, but suddenly he shouted,

"Joshua was too damn weak, that's all! The race is to the swift, the strong, the sonuvvabitching pigs who never even take their brass knuckles off in the bathtub. He—was—too—goddam—*weak,* for Christ's sake, Daphne! Now will you leave me alone and get the hell out?"

I got: embarrassed, frightened, appalled by his tears. But shamefacedly thanking the family gods that we were never, any of us, really, in Joshua's way at least, weak.

Joshua was well-treated at the hospital. The chief resident psychiatrist was a friend of my father's law-partner and anyhow, he said, Joshua was one of the most amenable patients he had ever had. Very soon we were allowed to visit him. I was frightened the first time, but he took my arm and led me to a bench on the hospital lawn where we talked pleasantly about my school work, how they treated him, and what books I should bring him next visit. When I left he called me "Betty Boop."

My mother went to see him regularly once a week. How she found time to add these visits to all the rest of her urgent scurrying, I'll never know. My own appearances were irregular and I did not look forward to them, but once there, with him, my anxiety drained away and I was almost as happy as I had been watching him work in the basement. I no longer believed I loved him; in a way of course I didn't—I never had.

We talked about everything except the boxes. He said of Vasiliki that "it was a kind of insanity even to have fallen for her."

I worked the toe of my oxford in the gravel, feeling I was hearing something too old for me.

"Dangerously immature," he continued, like a pupil who wants to please Teacher by giving the correct answer.

"Still . . ." He paused with an expression of stunned wonder on his face. ". . . what happened to me? What a dreamer I was! What pitiful, magnificent visions they personify!"

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"They?" I asked myself. "They *who?*"

On another, very different day we were walking through the gardens loosely holding hands when suddenly he turned to look closely at me, his face right up against mine—as if he were near-sighted, I remember thinking at the time.

"I should have waited for you to grow up, Daphne. But of course you wouldn't bother with someone like me. Why should you?" And he laughed deprecatingly.

I could have said right then, "Yes I *will* bother." I was thirteen now—almost a woman—but I was too startled and besides I didn't want to. The moment spilled on really unnoticed, for Joshua had from the beginning been relegated to dreamland.

As time passed I began to feel that growing up was learning not to care. I decided that in removing myself from Joshua—from my dreams—I had begun to grow up.

After Joshua was released and took a job teaching handicrafts in a trade school (work for which he was conspicuously unsuited), we continued to visit back and forth, but gradually and almost consciously I forced our relationship into a new pattern in which I was the elder, the big sister, the girl-mother. He played along with it although sometimes I used to catch him watching me with the quirk of a smile. I think that by trying to dominate him I was trying to keep my dreams under control.

We had of course to see that he didn't meet Vasiliki at our house. This was not easy, for she was always running in "just to say hello" but really to find a good husband at our hands. At first my mother would barely speak to her, but gradually even her principles were caught and enervated by Vasiliki's wiles. Vasiliki and I were quite comfortable together. We agreed about very little except the unspoken mutual tact which absolutely prohibited any mention of that conversation at Prince Castle, and this bound us together in easy familiarity.

As time went on, I was occasionally made the recipient of her discarded boyfriends, gifts which I accepted without any false pride. Sometime, I don't know exactly when, I had decided that I wasn't above taking what I could get where I could get it. By and by, one of these rejects (the dullest, of course; isn't it always that way?) made me. The seduction was mutual—both

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pantingly determined. The act took place in our garden hammock: no mean accomplishment. Because of the lurching, swaying hammock, he couldn't scramble out of his clothes, and I never got to see what he really looked like, but it didn't much matter. I was made, initiated, deflowered, uncherried: no longer a silly, giggling virgin like most of my friends, surreptitiously passing around dirty paragraphs about creamed bananas, but a woman, a queen, or at least a princess.

The boy, somewhat to my surprise, had got genuinely excited, he wanted to meet again. I held up my chin, gazing off into the delicious landscapes beckoning me on, and said no thank you. I was a princess, wasn't I? Casual dispenser of ladies or tigers. Sometimes ladies (myself) but quite frequently tigers, too.

I was wise enough not to sleep around. Some tatter of dream remained around my shoulders like a leash, and I was also aware that I must protect my reputation. The world couldn't get too familiar with a princess, or she would lose her power. I learned that Vasiliki permitted the most extraordinary liberties without ever "going the whole way." I didn't despise her. She was a good Greek girl: just didn't have the soul of a princess. It wasn't her fault.

One day when I went to drop off at Joshua's a box of cookies Mother had packed for him—she was always putting up extra batches of cookies for other people: "our Joshua" or "our Marianne"—I found two small canvases propped against the sofa-back in his one-room apartment. They were still tacky: I could smell the turpentine. I was relieved that he didn't look at me as I stared at them, because I didn't like them.

But when I dropped in again, perhaps two weeks later, he was openly at work on some boxes. The top of his only table looked as if he'd just turned the waste-basket upside down on it.

I said "Joshua!" I was so excited I bent down and kissed his cheek.

Again he didn't look up, but he said with his smile—"There this one will be for you."

He brought it round the following week, and it was "Little Side-Dream," exactly as it had been, even to the black curl.

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I said, "Where did you get the hair, Joshua?" I think I was actually jealous again for the breath of an instant.

He laughed. "What did you think? That I'd kept only one of your curls?"

But there were no more good boxes. Whatever it was that had made them good was gone. Vanished. Blitzed. I think he realized this—I am sure he did from a remark he made to me sometime later about failure. But slowly he continued to turn them out. Frequently he went back to see his psychiatrist, and they held long discussions together. Perhaps they talked about his boxes. I don't know. Joshua was a very patient man, but he was no longer either talented or mad. I think his talent blew out at the same time as that lovely wildness in his eyes. This was hardly the psychiatrist's fault. Please understand that I am not repeating "artists are madmen" or "psychoanalysis removes the desire to create"—those glib catch-phrases of our blind times. Joshua was not The Artist. He was a particular human being in a special set of circumstances. I think the light in Joshua's eyes was a conviction of immortality—mistaken, maybe, but necessary to *his* continuance as an artist. That light was quenched when he realized that the striking of a match had—not *could,* but *had*—destroyed his fantasies. Killed his boxes. That his dreams had proved to be as casually ephemeral as his mere life.

At about the time I went off to college he got a much better job and moved to another city, but we corresponded with some regularity. It was 1943 and he was glad, he wrote, to be ruled 4-F (shirker! draft-evader! people said) because of those weeks in the state hospital. He had a small lath-and-plaster bungalow with a garden, and he would much prefer, he remarked in a letter to me, killing weeds than people.

I was having a rousing good time at college. There were almost no male civilians left on campus, but the air force, in its infinite wisdom, had seen fit to set up a base in the next town—eight minutes by bus, every hour on the hour. I liked the air force uniforms, and the sense of dash and urgency their lives imparted to the "boys" excited me, too.

Why was it that there was nothing so sexy as frolicsome Mr. Jones, jauntily tap dancing around the corner? Flyers were killed

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all the time in routine training flights, and with each crash we co-eds pursued the survivors ever more hotly. It was more than grab-pleasure-while-you-can. More than the youthful romantic desire to give ourselves to potential heroes. It was as though we were trying to get through, into the very crashes, to immolate our own young bodies on those exploding gasoline pyres. We wanted to die, too, consumed by our sex, the violence of the times, the frightful rape of flame and history. We wanted to kill and be killed in one glorious holocaust—to become both the raper and the raped in the red womb of our crazy collective suicide. And we would do strange things to express our excitement. A certain memory recurs.

I am lying flat on my back between the lectern and the altar in the Church of the Holy Trinity. I have not a stitch on and the young gentleman on top of me, pumping sweatily away, hasn't either. We have earlier in the day rejected both the Baptist and the First Congregational as not provocative enough in their imagery, and as I lie there afterward staring thoughtfully up at the medium-high church Episcopalian stars in the modest plaster firmament above me, I reflect (in that moment of awesome clarity which always follows a climax with someone you in no way love)—I *understand* that what we have really been looking for up there is a good, old-fashioned, implacable Byzantine Pancreator like those I have seen in slides of Monreale and Daphne (yes!).

Of course I am not ashamed. I use the Church of the Holy Trinity the way I use the "boys," to excite me with the spectacle of my own prodigious power. And to see if I can't get caught, somehow, and be made to die for it all. Oh, sweet death, with your infinitely wet kisses.

Even Vasiliki has got her husband (acquired, of course, through us) killed in the Battle of the Bulge, and now my family finally shuns her. Even Jason won't speak to her when he meets her on the street. It is as though they suspect she is a witch, has the Evil Eye, and so at last she can be allowed to pay (lucky Vasiliki) for what she did to Joshua.

Am I never to pay? Later my boy takes me to a forbidden roadhouse with an imitation log-cabin bar. Not beer, but whiskey for the boys have money to squander in the quaint, rusticated

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antechambers of doom. I have two scotch-on-the-rocks that I remember and then probably more. Suddenly I am insisting that I must see Joshua.

"Who?"

"My uncle."

"A-a-ah!"

My boy is getting too familiar: he questions my word. I sway up the bar—has anybody got enough gas coupons to drive me to Cleveland?

"You bet I'll drive you to Cleveland, baby! Me and my buddy here—NOW?"

Since I do not believe in mass fornication (princesses are particular), I catch the ten o'clock bus alone.

I have a distant suspicion—all my suspicions are distant now —that Joshua is a little displeased by my condition when he opens his lath-and-plaster front door. But I also suspect that he is genuinely delighted to see me. He takes off my shoes, makes me coffee, and turns up the thermostat.

"Now," he says, "now, Betty Boop, what the devil have you been up to?"

I gaze over the rim of my cup into his sweet, fond, innocent, patient face, and I decide to give it to him straight. He's asking for it, isn't he? Betty Boop, indeed!

And I do. In spite of a certain drunken tendency to dump all my words into one pot, like a goulash, I begin with the hammock, progress through Uncle Sam's boys, and conclude chapters later with the Church of the Holy Trinity. I get to liking the sound of my own voice and describe actors and scenes in rapturous, epic catalogs. When I run out of true confessions, I make them up and since, in spite of everything, I am not really so wicked as I like to believe, some of the most inspired episodes in my saga are fictitious. Perhaps he understands this. I never really stop, however; I just drivel off to sleep in his armchair.

When I waken he forces more coffee on me, washes my face, and bundles me into his car for the sixty-mile drive back to college. I must use up a month's gasoline ration; he can't have a very high priority. Before letting me out at my dormitory, he takes

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me sternly by the shoulders. His thin fingers dig through the wool of my coat.

"Listen! Can you understand me? If your parents ever hear any of this—from *anyone*—I'll slap that stupid smirk right off your face myself! OK. Now go on up to bed and try sleeping by yourself for a change. What do you think you look like: coming to me like a slut tonight?"

In the morning I was fortunately still drunk enough to write him a letter of apology. My rhetoric was high-flown schoolgirl, but I don't remember what I said except for two things. *One*. That I would die if he didn't answer me. *Two*. P.S. That I loved him. Now this was not really true, of course, but I was still in the grip of an arsenic green hangover: the asphalt billowed puckishly as I crossed the street to the mailbox.

My answer came the next afternoon, by special delivery, and since I still have it, like all the other letters he wrote me, I'll transcribe a little of it.

"You do not disgust me. Don't say that! Nothing you ever do can disgust me, and I'm sorry if I said some hard things. I was furious. At first I felt I had failed you, somehow, for you to do these things, as I have failed in other ways. Later on I remembered that you are grown and a free agent and must make your own choices. But I think you can't really know anything about death, though you talked so much about it the other night or you wouldn't try so hard to hurt yourself in these ways. It is simply not pleasant or sexy or even easy to die—so don't." There followed a humorous paragraph about the garden and then

"P.S. Yes, Daphne, I love you."

By the time I got his letter I was sober, twenty years old and yellow with embarrassment. As far as I let myself reflect on the matter, I perceived that by traipsing drunkenly into his parlor to confess I appeared to have been issuing another invitation. Probably I had only our old friendship to thank for the fact that Joshua hadn't made me right in that overstuffed armchair. Then I remembered Sarah and Nanette and Vasiliki, and scornfully concluded that nothing would have happened anyhow. For of course it never had.

Just the same, I vowed to reform and put the letter away

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to answer when I could face it. But I never had to. The next week he caught pneumonia hoeing in that damned garden and, even with sulfa, died in a few days. Perhaps if penicillin had been released for civilian use—but I don't think so. There is destiny.

Mother and Jason traveled three hundred and fifty miles for the funeral. I did not write them that I was in the infirmary, though I was tempted. I went with them to the funeral and forced myself to look into Joshua's box and I promised that fearsome, unnatural face . . . what? I don't know. To love, maybe. Simply to love.

I was sincere, but it is not so easy to keep promises. Love what? Whom? I like my work as an art critic very much, and I love my family. Perhaps that's enough. The promiscuity stopped, of course, and of course I quickly became a very steady character. Sometimes, I suspect, a bit of a bore.

Before leaving for Europe this summer I spent a week with all of them—my parents, Jason, his wife, their four-year-old Daphne Otis—in a cottage on one of the lakes where we go, where we've always gone.

Little Daphne said to me: "When will you be married, aunty? Will you be married tomorrow?"

"No."

"I'm very sorry," she answered with genuine regret.

"But Daphne, I don't really want to marry anyone I know."

It is true, but their obvious disbelief—all of them with apologetic eyes—unnerves me. When we fall to discussing Joshua, as we inevitably do, I can no longer sustain my objectivity. He rides up to greet me—that smiling skeleton beating time on his brass steed—and I become annoyed and questioning.

"I mean, why didn't he do good work after that?"

"Weak. He was too weak, I tell you!" My father shrugs. For him Joshua will always be a shrug. There he lost a battle, not with Joshua but with fate who leers and snatches back even from the grip of kings.

"He took himself in and out of a state institution. Single-handed. He laid hold of his life and lived it reasonably through to the end. I don't call that *weak,*" says Jason.

"Just the same, his relationships with women . . ." I proceed

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caustically. They have made me wince today, and I am going to kill Joshua over again if I have the chance.

"What *about* his relationships with women?"

My mother is bristling. Hands on hips, shoulders thrust forward pugnaciously, she glares at me. The white tower of her hair, still ramped and turreted like the Tower of Babel, trembles down its proud spiral with the passion of her defense. "Just because he didn't sleep with Sarah and break her *heart!* Well, Nanette was crazy about him and they had *quite* an affair together later on, I can tell you. Also, there were *several* other girls before he moved away, and then that married woman he lived with later . . . Oh, I was his confidante all right, and I used to say to him, 'Settle *down,* Joshua! Settle on *one* of them before it's too late!' And you see? I was right."

I am thunderstruck and some of it must show, for Jason roars with laughter and claps me a brother's clap on the shoulder. "Did you think he was going to carry the torch forever?"

"Carry the torch for whom?"

We are all confused and stare at one another and then off in several directions toward the somber black pines and the passive, sky-colored lake.

So that I no longer have even that leg to stand on.

Later that night I paced beside the lake, upon the round smooth pebbles the glaciers had broken and caressed down from rocks and left behind in their vast, magnificent passage, and I tried to understand and thaw that secret, hard core of my anger.

Absurd! I tossed into the charcoal dust of night, settling, like an invisible, infinitely soft fall of black snow, on the invisible, tender surface of the summer lake.

Absurd, but why not? I argue now, sitting stiffly upright in the icy sharp cold, arguing with Joshua who smiles into my eyes, as always, with an air of infinite relinquishment.

I observe him this time in earnest annoyance. My determination. My passionate nature. I am so used to getting my way because I know what I want. If he hadn't been so evasive I could have helped him do really good work again, as he did in our basement. Perhaps that's only conceit, but my mother and father seem to help each other work somehow; they still spar over sex,

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but as Mother said, "that is only part of it." I wouldn't really have been afraid to bear Joshua's children; I think all together we could have thrown up that magic ring of fire to protect our immortality.

I had a kind of share of immortality once. As always, my soul unwithers when I remember it. So did Joshua. Within that firey iron ring of Family—internecine passions, false pride, bitter resentments, pointless loyalties—in that magic area we were for a while doomed to live, not to die. If we had held tightly together, I think that no one, not even Vasiliki, could have hurt him.

But I suppose it's always the oldest child who breaks the ring first. One has to get out, go beyond, become a free agent. And it's probably woman's greatest single delusion that she can save a man from his destiny.

I am not crying now in Tyrol for Aggie, but for death, the stillborn life—that monstrous foreclosure of the mortgage after nine months of hard work and promises—the cancer at the bottom of the box, my own death at twelve years of age, my murder of Joshua. After all, he could never have loved me if he had known about the Prince Castle, could he? (But I dare say, wistful ghost, you could have performed even that miracle.)

There was only one thing he couldn't do. He couldn't raise himself from the dead. The absolute, imponderable quality of extinction surrounded him all in a breath, and he just wasn't able to ignore that awful Presence. I believe that every time he lifted his hand to paste some bauble in a new box, he felt it moving slowly through the ether of final outer space, and he simply didn't have the energy to push his way through it all alone. None of us do.

But I had so much energy, and I could have helped him. Had I been older, less selfish; had I understood; had I not been me.

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BOOKS

ART AND CRITICISM

ART AND CULTURE: CRITICAL ESSAYS. By Clement Greenberg. Beacon Press. $6.00.

If the history of modern art contains many great names, modern criticism of painting and sculpture includes at least a few. The list of the best is short and well-known: Baudelaire, Zola, Ruskin, Aurier, Huysmans, Fenéon. As both painters and poets are fond of pointing out, these men were not "just critics," but also writers. Each was the enthusiastic early discoverer and defender of one important contemporary artist. In the course of this defense each critic in some way identified himself publicly with the man whose work he supported, and became, or in the case of Baudelaire imagined himself to be, his friend.—Here Aurier is an exception. (I omit from this list Apollinaire, whose generously propagandizing *Cubist Painters* overflows with the early enthusiasm of great criticism, but lacks its required discrimination; and also Roger Fry, whose introduction of Cézanne to England, though badly needed at the time, was more critical history than bold contemporary criticism, socially rather than aesthetically adventurous.) Obviously, none of these men changed the course of modern art, although some of them, being normative critics, would have liked to have done so; but they did quicken, and thus at least deflect, the stream of acceptance.

In the United States only Clement Greenberg has been possessed of this particular combination of personal and critical involvement, has had the conviction and the insight to make himself the champion of one significant painter of his generation. He was Jackson Pollock's public and private friend, and his critical position has become identified with his defense of Pollock and the New York School of Painters. It is thus strange that this collection includes no single essay devoted to Pollock. There are some pages—less than those given to others—in the discussion of "American-

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Type Painting," and his work is mentioned elsewhere, but only briefly. This omission was surely deliberate, perhaps because Greenberg is working on a book. Nevertheless, it is a measure of the unexpected cumulative effect of a collection of essays whose excellences only emphasize its disappointments.

Here is a critic who is concerned about modern art, who observes with insight and attention to nuance and who takes the trouble to set forth his observations in great detail. Here are the important essays on "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" and "American-Type Painting." The discussion of the uses of cubist collage is the best and most minutely accurate description of its constructive workings that I know, besides being a miniature formal history of early cubism itself. The discussions of Cézanne, Renoir, Léger, Kandinsky, Eakins, among others, contain many analyses whose clarity still preserves complexity, and many judgments which derive convincingly from them. Greenberg is a critic who really looks at painting.

A few examples will suggest the quality of his observations: "The literalness with which Monet registered his 'sensations' could become an hallucinated literalness and land him on the far side of expected reality. . . ." "The depicted object [of cubism] was not so much formed as precipitated in clusters of facet-planes out of an indeterminate background of facet-planes—which in their turn could be conceived of as formed by the vibrating and expanding echoes of depicted objects." "Rouault's manner seems to have a life independent of the subjects to which it is applied." "The extension of the possibilities of the medium (and of tradition) is an integral factor in the exaltation to be derived from art . . ." "The American version of Abstract Expressionism is characterized . . by a fresher, more open, more immediate surface . . . [which] somehow manages to breathe."

Greenberg is also a man of some courage—and at times of the far side of courage. He is fascinated by that search for the absolute which he describes as one of the driving forces of modern art, and which fortunately never attains its goal. (The terms 'unity," "satisfying unity," "conclusive unity" constantly recur.) He can conclude a generally eulogistic essay with the question: 'We can ask whether Braque has not misunderstood himself since

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1914;" and wonder whether Kandinsky "did not make a mistake in terms of his own development by abandoning representational art when he did." The trouble here is not what it at first seems—overconfidence, but rather that (even if only retrospectively), the line between the critic as analyst and the critic as guide and prophet has been crossed. And what is one to make of "what really spoils Michelangelo's sculpture," or "the prohibition of one art's entering the domain of another." Such views belong to a different time and a different academy, and their appearance here is an indication of Greenberg's absolutist, purist position.

Given Greenberg's involvement with abstract expressionism and the art of the New York School, it is strange to discover that the real focus of his attitudes, in some way the obsessive theme of all these essays, is cubism. By its presence, its omission, or the reaction against it among the younger artists it is not so much the standard of quality (though one suspects it is this too) as the style through whose analysis and understanding all modern picture construction becomes comprehensible. And for Greenberg the only really viable cubism was that produced between 1907 and 1914; he sees what follows only as a struggle to assimilate and then to loosen the cubist hold. The results are curious: Miro is described as a late cubist (ignoring his fluid, arabesque line and infinite space); Picasso's *Three Dancers, Card Players,* and *Guernica* are all simply characterized as unsuccessful cubist compositions; and the whole development of the New York School is somehow reduced to a battle for freedom from cubist composition. Surrealism, in both its iconographic and structural aspects, is ignored. For Greenberg the evolution of modern painting can be summarized almost entirely in the formal terms of the flattening of the box-like space of the Renaissance which "modernism has rendered shallower and shallower until its back drop has become the same as its curtain, which has now become all that the painter has to work on": finally, after cubism, modeling disappears, and is replaced by the optical illusion of light alone.

All this is true enough, and well, if repetitively, analyzed and explained. But it reduces the whole history of modern art to the successive solutions found to an immanently developing formal problem. It ignores the various reactions against the well-made

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modern picture of the Cézanne-cubist-post-cubist lineage, reactions which include the fauves, the expressionists, the dadaists, the surrealists, and the New York School, and which while perhaps not producing works of the same "absolute quality" have nevertheless made important contributions and have besides been indispensable in recurrently saving the more classic tradition from academic sterility. The problems of picture making, and in particular American picture making, for which surrealism was so important, cannot be understood without a recognition of the role of these movements.

But the problems of picture making—or composition—are far from being the whole story. It is true that most, and most of the best, modern artists "derive their chief inspiration from the medium they work in." But the development of the medium is not, as Greenberg's argument constantly implies, an inevitable historical process. (There are remains here of the philosophical attitudes of the 'thirties.) "The avant-garde moves, while Alexandrianism stands still." True enough; but its moving involves choices, and those choices have to do with more than pure picture making or "the art in painting." (The phrase is Greenberg's, not Dr. Barnes'.) Greenberg's formal analysis of collage is superb; but can one discuss the birth of collage without mentioning that the "reality" introduced by Picasso's piece of chair-caning itself introduced an illusion? Choice or chance? Irony or pure design? The problem must be mentioned. Similarly, can one understand *The Three Musicians* while ignoring the humor of its levels of abstraction, or the *Guernica* while pushing aside its horror? Of course Greenberg may be saying that cubism is (or, dangerously, should be) an abstract style dealing with pictorial-optical, recession-surface problems, and has no business with subject matter anyhow. (I suspect this is what makes him put *Night Fishing at Antibes, The Korean Massacres* and *War and Peace* all in the same basket, whereas the first is an enormously better painting.) But is not this precisely to "condemn tendencies in art," which Greenberg properly says the critic cannot do? Cubism changed, and one cannot judge the individual pictures of the 'twenties and 'thirties by the idea of style established before 1914.

These omissions are even more serious when it comes to an

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understanding of the New York School. Once again, Greenberg's formal analyses are precise and penetrating. Where they fall short, as in the neglect of the importance of a space which can be interpreted as simultaneously infinite and flat in the paintings of Pollock or Kline, for example; in the estimation of the sources and formal effect of de Kooning's black and white paintings; or in his description of Rothko's evolution, it is because of his obsession with the cubist tradition. More fundamental is the way in which his entire concentration upon formal problems leads to a neglect of the new expressiveness of the New York School painters.

Greenberg points out that "these American painters did not set out to be advanced. They set out to paint good pictures they could sign with their own names." (Cf. Picasso: When we invented cubism we did not mean to invent cubism.) This is only partially true, I believe. During and just after the war, the artists of the New York School were conscious of carrying on the tradition; here Greenberg is correct. But this meant new pictures for new circumstances. They had to be honest with themselves and with American life. They were engaged in "telling the truth" and they talked a great deal about it. This truth was an emotional truth which would emerge from themselves if they knew how to allow it (here was a strong surrealist influence), and once told would reveal to their eventual audience, which they believed would some day be the whole—not just the museum-going—American public, the pretense of many of its current emotional and (yes!) social attitudes. (In "The Late Thirties in New York" there is one sentence on "how 'anti-Stalinism' . . . turned into art for art's sake" which suggests that Greenberg is aware of the context.) The New York group believed in the efficacy of this kind of emotional honesty, much as Courbet and Pissarro did in their telling the truth about nature, and like them, they believed that art and society moved forward together. In this sense they were consciously "advanced" painters; and in this sense too, rather than merely in the peripheral historical connections that Greenberg mentions, they were, and have remained, expressionist painters. This understanding is particularly important because that force of impact, that directness and discarding of finish which Greenberg rightly values in American painting had its source in this attitude and is bound up with

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it. If many of the younger artists, and some of the original generation, have lost it, it is because they too have concentrated entirely on how these pictures are made and have visibly produced a new, unexpressionist, unexpressive, and occasionally handsome, academicism.

The quality of this expressiveness, or that of Bonnard, or Matisse, or Braque, for that matter, is difficult to formulate. It cannot for all that be ignored, nor can it be resolved by purely formal analysis. (De Kooning may be a cubist, but his is a struggling cubism, and the struggle, which is in the pictures if not in the intention, makes his work different from earlier "similarly constructed works," and must be mentioned.) If one begins, as Greenberg apparently does, by ignoring the affective values of representational painting, which have to do, equally and inextricably, with the fusion of the associations of objects and, or in, their handling by the painter, one ends up with a purely formal, purely analytical attitude toward abstract art, which in turn robs it of its affective values. I should be the first to insist that there has been too much pseudo-philosophy, pseudo-psychology and pseudo-poetry written around modern painting, and especially the New York School. Greenberg's book is a wonderful counterweight to such accumulated divagations. It is a model of penetration in sticking to the visual evidence. But circumspect as one must be, one must also recognize that art has meaning beyond the purely formal relation of its internal parts.

Robert Goldwater

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NOTHING NEW ABOUT FREUD

LETTERS OF SIGMUND FREUD. Selected and edited by Ernst L. Freud. Translated by Tania and James Stern. Basic Books. $7.50.

I wish I could say these letters add to our knowledge of Freud. They do not. They do not make us see him in a new light. All the material presented here is familiar: it was used, and cited, by Ernest Jones in the three volumes of his study of the life and work of Freud. Even the photographs we get from the family album are those that we have looked at before. I think Papa would not have approved of this project.

This volume is also put together in an odd, uneven fashion. The first half consists of about one hundred letters which Freud wrote to Martha Bernays during the four and a half years of their engagement (1882-1886). The second half is a miscellany of highlights from the correspondence over some fifty years (1887-1939) between marriage and death. In other words, only the first part is a record in depth; yet, to be honest, even here there is nothing, or very little, that we haven't read before—in Jones, who studied this record of Freud's engagement carefully and with great insight. The letters confirm the story and meaning he extracted from them.

Thus we learn again about the fluctuations in Freud's moods: his shyness and awkwardness, his jealous flare-ups and quick remorse, his fears, depressions, and self-doubt. And we encounter again the well-known assets of his character: his courage and self-confidence, his tenacity and patience, his spirit of defiance, his incredible capacity for work, and above all his unconditional commitment to Martha—all fluctuations in mood and fortunes to the contrary notwithstanding. "How bold one gets when one is sure of being loved!" And how "wonderful is the institution [of nature] that every man finds a girl who sees in him the perfection of manhood, whereas in reality he is a miserable devil living by the grace of God's patience." It's nice to read these things in Freud's own words, but there is nothing here that will come as a surprise to anybody who has read his Jones. And I have nothing to add but a few private footnotes.

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In a letter (no. 7) written a month after their engagement Freud tells Martha about what happened when he bought her some engraved writing paper with "an M and an S intimately entwined" which "renders every page useless for intercourse save between Marty and me." The shopkeeper, an old Jew, draws him into a conversation expatiating upon Jewish life in Hamburg and upon the meaning of Judaism in general. The letter, I thought, glows with a subdued pride in Martha's grandfather, the *Chacham* Isaac Bernays, head of the Sephardic community in Hamburg. Freud was obviously conscious of marrying into a distinguished Jewish family, and quite pleased at the thought. And there was something else which caught my attention. The shopkeeper cites this great teacher, not only for his wisdom, but also for the Hasidic message he preached that "the Jew is made for joy and joy for the Jew." "The law commands the Jew to appreciate every pleasure, however small, to say grace over every fruit which makes him aware of the beautiful world in which it is grown." On taking leave Freud admits, "I was more deeply moved than the Old Jew could possibly guess" and promises Martha that "something of the core, of the essence of this meaningful and life-affirming Judaism will not be absent from our home." I am sure he kept the promise; yet only a year later (letter no. 18), while commenting upon a performance of *Carmen,* Freud conveyed to Martha a somewhat different message which came to be a cornerstone in the theory of psychoanalysis not yet dreamt of at this time: that the pleasure-principle means "avoiding pain [not] seeking pleasure," and that a rational economy of the self demands deprivation, not indulgence in the "appetites" which we find in *Carmen* and in "the psychology of the common man." "We deprive ourselves in order to maintain our integrity, we economize in our health, our capacity for enjoyment. . . . We save ourselves for something, not knowing what." That is of course also a Jewish thought, but it is not the voice of the Hasidim; it is much closer to the message of self-restraint and sublimation which Freud, in later life, associated with the voice of Moses.

Again, I did not remember from reading Jones how deeply Freud was involved in the unhappy love story of Minna Bernays, Martha's sister, who was engaged to a friend of Freud's by the

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name of Ignaz Schönberg. Schönberg broke his engagement, regressing to an infantile dependency upon "the once despised family," seeking "peace, only peace." It is, of course, risky to speculate and say that Freud, in part at least, may have identified with his friend's failure or that he may have tried to make up for it in his later friendship with Minna; but it is clear (as shown in letter no. 78) that he deeply empathized with his friend's breakdown and Minna's misfortune. And the fact remains that what was a sad failure in the case of Minna and Schönberg was a great success in the case of Freud and Martha. Thus I think it is not unlikely that the intimate relationship which developed between Freud and his sister-in-law in later years may have derived, in part at least, from the fact that Minna suffered a grievous disappointment and deserved a kind of substitute husband.

Finally, I came away from reading this correspondence with the feeling that Freud himself may have misjudged the significance of this period in his life. For him the four years of waiting for Martha were a curse because he couldn't support the woman he loved. Yet, in retrospect, they look like a blessing in disguise; for they enabled Freud to accomplish several things which were obviously of benefit in his marriage. First, the letters provided a kind of forum for finding his place and identity in the scientific world. They are surprisingly rich in detailed information about the progress of his studies and research; they show his growing reputation and the direction of his scientific interests. Even the crucial move in his professional life, from medicine to psychology via Charcot and Breuer, was made before he married Martha. Secondly, the letters helped Freud to identify himself as a husband-to-be. The period of adjustment—admittedly within Victorian conventions—came in and through these letters, not during the first years of married life. Thirdly, and quite unconventionally, these letters were also a kind of self-analysis. To be sure, they deal with "neurasthenic," not neurotic symptoms, with matters of mood and temperament, not with an analysis in depth; but both the forthright disclosure of emotional problems and the process of working them through in repeated confrontations are strictly "analytic." The love letters to Martha are the opening chapter,

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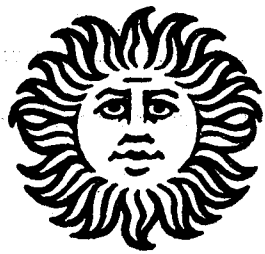

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as it were, in the private course of self-analysis culminating in the correspondence with Fliess.

Freud's analytic skill is an obvious talent displayed at an early age; *e.g.*, in the penetrating analysis of the suicide of his friend Nathan Weiss (letter no. 22). Yet it would be a mistake to say that Freud used letters chiefly for the purpose of analyzing himself or others. On the contrary, he was a good correspondent in quite an old-fashioned sense; first, because he was conscientious beyond the limits of what is humanly possible: according to his son, "he answered every letter he received . . . and as a rule this answer was in the post within twenty-four hours"; secondly, because he wrote very good letters of a purely descriptive, narrative kind. He loved to tell a good story and report factual incidents; he had a fine ear for dialogue and a sharp eye for observing the world. Here is a postcript from Rome: "Dear children, since describing the Piazza Colonna to you I have had a good look at it—one really ought to do so before—and I must correct a few things. There is indeed a lovely fountain in it, and people sit on its rim, but trolleys don't pass by, only horse-drawn buses. This shows how difficult it is to observe correctly. Today, by the way, was the first time the band didn't play. Fond Greetings. Papa."

The less said about the second half of this collection the better. Most of the letters here actually duplicate those which may be found in Jones. What we need now for a new look at Freud is something quite different: not another selection taking us on a familiar tour at too high a price, but a complete edition of his correspondence. What we need, in particular, are the letters (unexpurgated, of course) exchanged between Freud and his associates in the psychoanalytic movement.

There are, needless to add, a number of interesting details in this collection which Jones neglected, but these are minor matters. The general outline of Freud's personality revealed in the letters after 1900 corresponds to the features with which we are familiar from the portrait by Jones. It is the portrait of the old man who in achieving recognition and fame succumbs increasingly to thoughts of death and despair.

The idea of death occupied Freud ever since the death of his father, in 1896, produced the great crisis which resulted in the

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birth of psychoanalysis. "At that time," he wrote later, "I had reached the peak of loneliness. . . . The only thing that kept me going was a bit of defiance and the beginning of *The Interpretation of Dreams.*" (Incidentally, I was surprised by the strain of loneliness running through Freud's life despite a big family, many friends and associates, and correspondents everywhere.) It is also known how deeply Freud reacted to the reality of death and violence during World War I; but I confess I wasn't quite prepared for the profound impact which other deaths had upon him —the death of his daughter Sophie (in 1920): a "bitter, irreparable narcissistic injury" coinciding with "the undisguised brutality of our time"; the anguished outcry after the death of Sophie's younger son, Heinele, aged 4½ (in 1923): "I have never experienced such grief . . . I was aware of never having loved a human being . . . so much"; the controlled sorrow after the death of Karl Abraham (in 1925): "the greatest loss that could have struck us"; and the strange "feeling of liberation [and] release" after the death of his mother (in 1930): "I was not free to die as long as she was alive, and now I am."

Reading these letters in succession overwhelms one with the cumulative sense of gloom and despair they convey—reinforced, of course, by the increasing burden of physical suffering to which Freud was condemned in old age. At eighty he wrote: "Truth is unobtainable"—yet the critics will continue to blow the horn that he was dogmatic; "humanity doesn't deserve it, and incidentally, wasn't our Prince Hamlet right when he asked whether anyone would escape a whipping if he got what he deserved?" Yet, in the same breath, he clung to the life-affirming defiance of the Old Jew. "Even if my defiance is silent," he told Stefan Zweig, who did not hold out, "it remains defiance nevertheless and—*impavidum ferient ruinae.*" It is the old spirit of Promethean defiance "saved for a long, tenacious struggle" which he recommended to Martha at the beginning of their engagement.

> *Let us consult*
> *What reinforcement we may gain from hope;*
> *If not, what resolution from despair.*

This resolution did not fail him—vindicating Breuer's astute

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estimate of the young Freud: "an extremely daring and fearless human being" behind a deceptively timid appearance. "I have often felt," Freud confessed to Martha, "as though I had inherited all the defiance and the passions with which our ancestors defended their Temple." From this heritage he drew the strength with which he defended his integrity to the end.

Hans Meyerhoff

MORE LOVELESS LOVE

A BURNT-OUT CASE. By Graham Greene. Viking. $3.95.

"The passenger wondered when it was that he had first begun to detest laughter like a bad smell."
". . . I suffer from nothing. I no longer know what suffering is. I have come to the end of all that, too."
"The boat goes no further."
". . . I am sorry, I am too far gone, I can't feel at all, I am a leper."

The passenger, a distinguished church architect named Querry, is the hero of Graham Greene's new novel, *A Burnt-Out Case*. Querry has been loved by many women; he is successful and famous—above all, *famous*. And from it he has ended up tired, morally despairing, filled with self-loathing, insisting upon his loss of feeling, his deadness. Loss of feeling? What does it mean? Fitzgerald's "Crack-up"—what is really meant, what has happened? "And then, ten years this side of forty-nine, I suddenly realized that I had prematurely cracked." The cracked plate, the burnt-out case, the reserved, evasive actually, description of some overwhelming emotional crisis. Fitzgerald: "I saw that even my love for those closest to me was become only an attempt to love. . . ." Querry: "She was once my mistress. I left her three months ago, poor woman—and that's hypocrisy. I feel no pity."

Fame and emptiness. Fame burns out Querry; it surrounds him with horrors who draw near to touch or to fall in love. "Fame is a powerful aphrodisiac." Publicity, the bed sore of the fame sick, inflicts its pains. Querry has abandoned his career and gone

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to a leprosy hospital in the Congo. He is at the end of the road; the boat goes no further; his vocation for building and for loving women has given out; he is empty, desperately and courageously "dead." But his fame runs along after him; he is discovered; he is exposed by a journalist; he is pursued by a European manufacturer of margarine, Rycker, who feels for the famous man the mad, easily resentful but somehow grotesquely transfigured, love made of Querry's success and their shared Catholicism. The famous architect and lover is now, in some sense, impotent. ("He told me once that all his life he had only made use of women, but I think he saw himself in the hardest possible light. I even wondered sometimes whether he suffered from a kind of frigidity.") Rycker kills the object of his overweening curiosity, Querry, because of an imaginary infidelity. "Absurd," Querry said, "this is absurd or else . . ."

There is an absence of particularity, of the details of experience, in Querry's crack-up, just as there is in Fitzgerald. We reach the end of a great and adored man and accept the despair without

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any real idea of how it came to be. Curtness, coolness, even carelessness mark the mode of expression. Fitzgerald: "Sometimes, though, the cracked plate has to be retained in the pantry, has to be kept in service as a household necessity. It can never again be warmed on the stove nor shuffled with the other plates in the dishpan; it will not be brought out for company, but it will do to hold crackers late at night or to go into the ice box under leftovers." Querry in disgust: "The darkness was noisy with frogs, and for a long while after his host had said good night and gone, they seemed to croak with Rycker's hollow phrases: Grace: sentiment: duty: love, love, love." Self-condemnation, indifferent, impersonal, given out as a Confession, a general statement of sinfulness, without names or places. Art has failed to bring peace; success does not bring happiness to wives, mistresses or children.

From *Death in Venice*: Art "engraves adventures of the spirit and the mind in the faces of her votaries; let them lead outwardly a life of the most cloistered calm, she will in the end produce in them a fastidiousness, an over-refinement, a nervous fever and exhaustion, such as a career of extravagant passions and pleasures can hardly show." This is a price, perhaps, but a noble, classic fate—far from the sardonic ash-heap of Greene. Or compare Mailer's *Advertisements,* a confession in which I, at least, do not hear the voice of personal suffering and so suppose it wasn't intended. The alcoholic reserve of Fitzgerald and the manic expressiveness of Mailer show the twenty years or more that separate the personal documents. For Mailer, more and more experience, more and more fame—the Congo as an assignment, perhaps, not as a retreat. "Publicity can be an acid test for virtue," Greene says. Poor Hemingway, honorifically carried to his grave by those wooden angels, the restaurant owner Toots Shor and the gossip columnist Leonard Lyons.

In *The Heart of the Matter* the weary hero faced damnation because of his unconquerable pity for the women whom destiny, capriciously, or due to his own wanting, left in his care. Pity is way beyond Querry. He doesn't want to pretend any longer; it is all meaningless. Fornication is a burden and love is impossible. And yet, what is it about? How to account for the flight, the coldness, the refusal? We have Querry's "aridity" seen by the priests at

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the leper colony, but we do not have the love affairs or the life of the great architect that make the extraordinary final emptiness important. We see the soul at a point of theological instability, and there only.

Greene has a unique gift for plot and a miraculous way of finding a clever objective correlative for his spiritual perplexities. Loss of faith in art and love equals the "cure" of the leper, mutilated, but at last without pain. The humid tropical atmosphere, the tsetse flies, the intense *colons,* with their apologies and their arrogance, the strained, disputatious priests, interestingly pock-marked with weaknesses: this is the properly exotic and threatening setting for the Greene dialogue. *A Burnt-Out Case* seemed a partial failure to V. S. Pritchett in his *New Statesman* review. He felt the influence of the stage had been unfortunate and worked less well than an earlier absorption of film technique. Yet he is not entirely dissatisfied and decides that Querry, the hero, succeeds as a vehicle for certain ideas if not as a "man." Pritchett calls Graham Greene, "the most piercing and important of our novelists now."

Frank Kermode in a brilliant article in *Encounter* is unhappy about *A Burnt-Out Case.* He finds it " so far below one's expectation that the questions arise, was the expectation reasonable and has there been any previous indication that a failure of this kind was a possibility?" In Kermode's view *The End of the Affair* is Greene's best novel because, to simplify, here the author more openly and with greater seriousness faces his case against God.

Querry, a builder of Catholic churches, is only, the novel tells us, "a legal Catholic." He doesn't pray, he loathes being dragged into other people's lives by the ropes of his religion and his fame; he doesn't want his sins to be made interesting as priests in novels like to do with villains; he resents having his vices stubbornly interpreted as incipient virtues. Father Thomas frantically insists upon absorbing a devastated, worldly spirit. "Don't you see that you've been given the grace of aridity? Perhaps even now you are walking in the footsteps of St. John of the Cross, the *noche oscura.*" In trying to come to some sort of judgment about Greene as a novelist one would have to ask himself whether a significant picture of modern life in the last thirty years could be made from doctrinal puzzles, seminarian wit and paradox, private jokes, Roman Catholic

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exclusiveness. The characters take their sexual guilt and stand at the edge of damnation discussing possibilities for fresh theological interpretations. They are weary and romantic and fascinated by suffering and they look upon themselves and their feelings in a peculiarly intense Catholic-convert way, with a sort of intellectual, clannish, delighted sectarianism. The question is not, in the great Russian manner, how one can live without God, or with God; the question is how one can exist as a moral, or immoral, man without running into vexing complications with the local priest. Marriage, love, sex, pride, art, no matter where you turn things are not quite as the Church would have it and to function at all one has to break rules or offer new versions of the old.

Of course Greene is fascinated by sin and heresy; it could not be otherwise. His terse novels with their clear, firm themes and symbolic situations, are acted out by men with beautifully apt gifts for language, men raised on Cardinal Newman and Ronald Knox. The world is anti-psychological; the world of psychoanalytical motivation does not exist, its questions are never raised, its interpretations never suggested. Class, childhood, history are irrelevant, too. These are indeed peculiar novels. The omission of so much life and meaning, of the drama of social and psychological existence would seem to be ultimately limiting. There is a sense of disfiguration, baffling sometimes, and yet always intellectually exciting. Everything is sharper and more brilliant than the effects of other writers. God is a sort of sub-plot and the capricious way He treats Roman Catholics is a suspenseful background to love and boredom and pity. It is most perplexing.

How often Greene sees the living thing as a dead or trivial object, an article of manufacture. "A smile like a licorice stick" "the pouches under his eyes were like purses that contained the smuggled memories of a disappointing life"; "he was like the kind of plant people put in bathrooms, reared on humidity, shooting too high. He had a small black moustache like a smear of city soot and his face was narrow and flat and endless, like an illustration of the law that two parallel lines never meet."

Licorice sticks, purses filled with snakes, leggy bathroom plants are lined up for the argument, the great debate over a whisky and soda at some peaceful, intellectual Priory. And meanwhile it

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really to church that Sarah (*The End of the Affair*) is going and not to meet her lover. God laughs maliciously. On this stage, with its oddly clear and yet humanly peculiar themes, with its weary, engaging purity of design, these brilliant, original works take place, each one as arresting as the other: Catholic-convert dramas of sex and renunciation, belief and defiance.

Elizabeth Hardwick

PLOT, CHARACTER, ETC.

TAKE A GIRL LIKE YOU. By Kingsley Amis. Harcourt, Brace & World. $3.95.
A SEVERED HEAD. By Iris Murdoch. Viking. $3.95.
PRIZE STORIES 1961, THE O. HENRY AWARDS. Edited by Richard Poirier. Doubleday. $3.95.
HEAR US O LORD FROM HEAVEN THY DWELLING PLACE. By Malcolm Lowry. Lippincott. $4.95.

Kingsley Amis and Iris Murdoch are two of those British writers who, unlike Americans, turn out novels one after the other as if this were still the nineteenth century. Here they are again this season. In America they would still be promising young writers struggling with their souls, unread and half-forgotten after one success; instead, each of them with five or six books is already well along toward that Uniform Edition which almost any British writer can expect to see in his lifetime and which no American novelist living or dead now has in print. Why is this? Well, perhaps a narrow answer can say something. These are comic novels, and so they can use all the old-fashioned machinery of fiction; they are full of plot, character, setting, and yes, thought and diction, too. Yet they are not old-fashioned books but very up-to-date, post-modern in fact, so sophisticated that in their true form each is a sort of comment on plot, character, and all that, an homage to the novel, like the homage-paintings Paris artists used to make after the masters, part parody, part criticism, and finally, part honest emulation of what is taken to be the permanent and underlying principle of the master, not his accident of style or subject. Does all this allow them—and their readers—to keep going?

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In *Take a Girl Like You,* Amis keeps us going with the oldest trick in the world, or a trick as old anyway as *Clarissa.* The question is, will Jenny Bunn be seduced? We have to read 306 of the 320 pages before we find out. No "serious" novelist would dare use such a simple-minded plot; and I wonder if a serious novelist could make us reverse our assumptions of the day that of course Miss Jenny Bunn and everyone else should be seduced, if there is still such a thing, and the quicker the better. Amis does make us reverse these feelings, or at least makes us wish we might, for a while. He used tricks like this in *Lucky Jim,* where he managed to reverse an entire convention of feelings in an attack on "culture" more total than that of Dada; in opposition to old English ballads, "filthy Mozart," abstract painting, old tweed jackets, he placed a real, crummy world of young men who may lecture on Chaucer but dream of motorcycles, pretty girls, and jazz records, and who become heroes because they are brash enough to fumble and cheat their way to what they want. It was the kind of news that all true novelists try to bring us: "Look, that world you suppose is real is not, it was all packed up some time ago; this is what we have now."

Amis's old cast of funny people is here again, in *Take a Girl Like You,* and they are assigned with the brisk brutality of a comic novelist to their proper stations, stooge or dud or middle or, rarely and with luck, something better: "Now there was no doubt that he was top maybe and perhaps even getting in sight of smasher." He has a deadly eye for petty pretensions of manner. Jenny wonders if Dick, the landlord of her boarding house, is really a stooge: ". . . not enough to count as a fulltime job for a grown man, a man past thirty. And why did the rims of his glasses not go all the way round the lenses? Perhaps time would show." Jenny Bunn i a girl of twenty down from the North to teach school, herself a real smasher with "lovely long race-horse legs" as she well knows but oddly full of old-fashioned ideas about virginity. How d things look to a pretty young girl? How can we possibly fee sympathy for her precious view of herself? But we do, becaus she is endowed with the cruel eye of the young, and of the comi novelist, for good luck and bad luck and what they can mea

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for the hopeless ugliness that one might as well have had but did not. How precarious life is!

Although she was ashamed of doing so, Jenny took a great interest in these and other mothers. As regards about two out of three of them there was a terrific difficulty in imagining them taking part in the act that, seven or five or even three or fewer years ago, had ended up in the children they had come to meet or brought along. They looked—the thing had got to be faced—much too horrible. Not only that, but the kind of man who thought they were not horrible, or not horrible enough to make much odds, must himself be more horrible still. . . . Jenny hoped that it was just that all those husbands were drunk, blind drunk, all the hours there were. . . . At the end of the line today was a creature looking like a giant mad sheep. . . .

This is a girl's or boy's cruelty and pity, the comic cruelty, and with it goes the girl's or boy's smirking, and greed, and Amis's Horatio Alger view of success, and the delight in disconcerting the officious—this last managed not quite so well here as it used to be by Evelyn Waugh's heroes, who could do it by inquiring, "Why do you spit when you talk?" Amis's Patrick Standish can only say, trying to put down the College secretary who has scolded him about parking his car in the wrong place, "But I thought things were supposed to have changed since you were a young man. They've had plenty of time, God knows." Thus it seems sometimes that he doesn't deserve Miss Jenny Bunn, but it is he who gets her, and says to her, on the last page, "It was inevitable." "Oh yes, I expect it was," she says. "But I can't help feeling it's rather a pity." It is. And rather a pity, maybe, that Amis's heroes, for all their clear-eyed, cruel honesty, have little but a boy's brashness beyond that. A boy's world can be, among other things, very funny, but one can't live in it forever without becoming more than funny, without becoming grotesque.

Of plot, in *A Severed Head,* Iris Murdoch makes a good joke of character something not quite a joke, of setting, something real London, I take it, is London, the year is now, and this is what happens there but not really. So it was with the best of her other novels. The plots were complicated, full of reversals and consequences and recognitions, the characters were like those we mus

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imagine behind the mysterious events reported in newspapers. And yet not quite. In *The Flight From the Enchanter,* the mysterious Mischa Fox really was mysterious, he was always on the verge of magic. Her characters possessed the ability of characters in myths or fairy tales to charm one another, and to charm probably the reader as well; it worked, I thought, because this charm represented something like the aura that people really have for us as they gather to themselves, however temporarily, all the feelings we have about the key figures of life wherever we find them. If sometimes the characters in *The Flight From the Enchanter* seemed in danger of becoming symbolic, mere counters in a set of ideas, one could dodge a conclusion at last because it seemed there would be too much trouble in working it all out. And the characters didn't wear tags, and their strange actions were more like magic than like symbolism, that is, they were marvelous and irrelevant rather than hopelessly and endlessly suitable. I remember that book now as it was when I read it, full of fantastic, sinister, luminous but unilluminating set-pieces of drama: Rosa in bed with both the two strange brothers and a sort of blinding explosion goes off in the air; Rosa suddenly smashes the great fish tank at Mischa's party, in that place of his with the secret insides carved out of four adjoining Kensington houses; the wise man gone mad sitting in his room which is plastered all over except the ceiling with papers and books and pictures and statues, trying to decipher an undecipherable ancient script. . . . Even though everything might be explained, as the story developed, the actions and scenes retained their power of strangeness. And now, after reading *A Severed Head,* I do not want to go back to *The Flight From the Enchanter* and see if these things do make another sort of sense. This new novel has something of the old strangeness, a good deal of that sense of being very up-to-date, of spotting the latest types of character, the new style of bohemian girl, the new kind of analyst. But now they all stand for something, so that where before we scarcely knew what was going on, we know now all too well; and we know too much in another way, too. This is one of those first-person tales, and for too long we must read the hero's words with more than his own understanding of them, prig that he is. We know more than the hero, we see through him and around him: dramatic irony. But there is too

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much of it, he is too much of a personality for a first-person hero. To be sure, he changes—is changed, rather—by a series of jolting shock-treatments. Martin Lynch-Gibbon is a dilletante of business, a dilletante of history, rich, intelligent, of average sensuality; he has a beautiful wife in his beautiful house, a young mistress in her grubby room; he is well satisfied with this. Suddenly his wife . . . the plot. Is it a weakness in plot that giving it away seems unfair, as if it were a detective story with nothing of its own but its poor little secret? There are true surprises, one after another, and the readers doubtless are as surprised as Lynch-Gibbon when he sees who is in bed with whom now, in *this* chapter, and we wonder, as he does, or only a little more than he does, seeing through him as we do, who will be with whom in the next. The maneuverings are ingenious and for a while even scary, but the meaning is all too clear. This civilized, sensual, satisfied man is brought to the recognition of powers he never even dreamed about before, and to acts which would have seemed to him very bad taste indeed, brought to these things by a "tawny-breasted witch," powerful, brutal, Jewish, Jewish, again Jewish, as he insists; she talks about the dark powers. In the end, it seems, life lies before him at last. I wish it had ended not quite so systematically, and alas, it has even been suggested that his poor name shadows forth some suggestion about the Enlightenment. . . . But it is entertaining, sharp, intelligent, funny, and if you read very rapidly, if you like enough the mystification and are sufficiently uninterested in meanings, you should enjoy *A Severed Head.* The British still make the best tweeds, tobaccos, and novels.

Malcolm Lowry was putting the finishing touches on the manuscript of *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* when he died suddenly, at the age of forty-eight, in England in the summer of 1957. Born in Merseyside, son of an English cotton broker, mother's father a Norwegian sea captain who went down with his ship; public school; at eighteen, before going up to the university, went to sea; novel published, 1933; mid-1930's, came to the United States, New York, Hollywood; 1938, in Mexico, wrote the first draft of *Under the Volcano;* 1940, married, went to live in British Columbia in a shack, rewrote *Under the Volcano,* published 1947; stayed on, mostly around Vancouver

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All this from the dust jacket. These stories, obliquely or directly, are about that life, about a man named Sigbjorn Wilderness, or Kennish Drumgold Cosnahan, or some such name, or a nameless man, men who have had that career, or something like it. The man is broke, alcoholic, talented, and loves his wife as much as we would love the air if we were drowning. She is on every page, invisible though, like air, the condition of life. These are wild stories made up about himself by an angry, proud, long-winded, oddly ignorant, cranky and romantic old Crusoe who is all the time in such states of profound despair and profound joy that he holds on not by scratching a calender on a post but by telling these stories over and over again. The stories wallow and stagger and sometimes reach a kind of archaic magnificence which probably sounds simple without all the wallowing. Once there was a little boy who launched a toy boat in the sea, with a message sealed in it, and the toy boat drifted in the sea, years and years, "through the tempests of winter, over sunny summer seas, what tide rips had caught it, what wild sea birds, shearwaters, storm petrels, jaegers,

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that follow the thrashing propellers. . . . Perhaps it had rested, floating in a sheltered cove, where the killer whale smote . . . lying aground knocked from side to side in an inch of water . . . or a poor old tin can . . . or carried under a lonely salt-grey shack, to drive a seine fisherman crazy all night with its faint plaintive knocking . . . brimming black tides . . . huge calm tides. . . ." And a girl found it. And years and years later, one day two people are walking, "a man and a beautiful passionate-looking girl, both bare-headed," the man tall, thick-set, bronzed, tattooed; "the man paused every now and then to gaze into the lovely laughing face of his girl. . . ." Over and over they tell the story to one another. "It was a day just like this that I set the boat adrift."

Some of the stories are as finished as they ever could be; about others, we must wonder. One of the refinements authors make in doing what they may call polishing is much more than revising away the slips of off-center clauses and the little plagues of echoing words, of wrong diction. They burn away their vanity and pettiness, their jealousy and boasting. "Tragedy of someone who got out of England to put a few thousand miles of ocean between himself and the non-creative bully boys and homosapient schoolmasters of English literature only to find them so firmly entrenched in even greater power within America . . . dictatorship of opinion . . . entirely a matter of cliques who have the auxiliary object of nipping in the bud any competitive flowering of contemporary and original genius. . . . What! A person like myself (he is called Martin Trumbaugh here, in this story) who discovered Kafka for himself nearly 20 years ago, and Melville 25 years ago, when about 15, and went to sea at 17. . . ." Maybe Lowry wanted all that in. But though it happened, though the thoughts came and were set down, and though they were part of the character, they are not true really, he had a right to make himself better than this. Surely he must have made himself better on his good pages, and for many pages together in the good stories here. The man who wrote these pages sounds as if he knew all about himself and was fighting for his life, fighting in an old-fashioned way, determined to hold to what he took for the laws of "chivalry." These pages seem to come, many of them, out of true despair, like the pages of *Under the Volcano,* and they sound also as if they were

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written with enormous effort. Perhaps it is that great effort which makes the pages and the life they try so hard to describe seem distant and ancient so that, when they come, the observations of things now around us, things we ourselves maybe hadn't even quite noticed yet, they come often as a shock. All this happened only yesterday. But, not many people try this hard anymore.

The O. Henry Prize Stories have started up again, edited now by Richard Poirier, author of *The Comic Sense of Henry James.* I wonder, who reads short stories? When you pick up a magazine, do you turn to the short story? What is it doing there, anyway? It looks as boring as a poem, and probably it is. Maybe if you yourself write short stories, yes, you take a quick slice at it, to see who's doing it now, is he one up on you or not, what's he copying. . . . Who are these people, what do they want. . . . No, of course, some short stories are better than other short stories, and it is true that now and then there is even genuine pleasure in them; in, I think, the ones that are old-fashioned tales, like Malcolm Lowry's boat story, like Ivan Gold's in this collection, a familiar kind of Army exposé, but teasing the reader along, lots of plot and plenty of character; or like Peter Taylor's "Heads of Houses" in this book, a comic, subtle juggling of the humors of family life, ending, like all of Taylor's best stories, up in the air on a comically-strung cat's cradle over a dreadful abyss. But these others. So many of them are about a child's reluctant discovery of death or sex. You do not want to hear, any more than I want to say, why this should be. And as for style, there seem to be two attempts, one pure golden Mid-West, "The day was clear, with an icicle-blue clearness, and the frigid sun huddled not far above the horizon, surrounded in its rainbow of sun-dogs." The other sounds like the jittery teen-age burlesque of the comic book, *Mad,* but I miss the point, perhaps because I don't know what it is that is being burlesqued. " 'You're so goddam potted I should be able to grow by standing on you, shnook! Knock off the Ivy line,' I said angrily, signalling Nick to pour me another beer, 'what's the cut of those Sears Roebuck duds you're wearing but Ivy?' " Reading these stories, I meditate unfairly that the University of Iowa Workshop is to writers what the WPA once was to painters, and *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Prairie Schooner* their Post Office walls. Yet out

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there, too, I suppose, they talk about plot and character, style and setting. Maybe it is just too late.

John Thompson

FICTION CHRONICLE

THE LIME TWIG. By John Hawkes. New Directions. $3.50.
THE CROSSING POINT. By Gerda Charles. Knopf. $4.50.
JOURNEY NOT TO END. By Paul Herr. Bernard Geis Associates. $3.95.
THE BACHELORS. By Muriel Spark. Lippincott. $3.95.

Mr. John Hawkes, by now an established experimental and "anti-realist" writer, takes a familiar story, that of innocent people in the grip of a mob of gangsters, and through his style of baroque surrealism shreds it into a series of fantastic and jumbled horror images. Mr. Hawkes is a writer with one great advantage—a genuine talent in the use of language; and one great disadvantage —a pre-conceived notion ("anti-realism") of what a novel should be. The advantage enables him, at any particular moment, to spur and drive his prose into aliveness, so that even when one is troubled by the claims and pretensions of his fable, or by the incommensurability between the fable itself and the weight of significance imposed upon it, one responds with steady interest to the imagery, the powerful syntax, and the sheer capacity for vivid local evocations. But these gifts, as essential to the novelist as they are rare, seldom emerge freely or autonomously in Mr. Hawkes's work. His anti-realist bit having become a predictable gambit, he is by now the prisoner of his literary ideology, which can be quite as crippling as any other kind of ideology. Mr. Hawkes's commitment to the "anti-realist" novel indicates at the very least a sophisticated awareness of how problematic conventional realistic narrative has become during the past half-century; but finally this commitment proves just as narrowing, just as defensive, just as much a token of vanity as say James T. Farrell's insistence upon naturalism. It means that Mr. Hawkes writes novels to a program, a pattern; that

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he encumbers his essentially frail material with a heavy apparatus of the oblique and surrealist; and that he allows the "anti-realism," in which he takes such innocent delight, to decline into a spectacle of the irrational and horrifying. Mr. Hawkes succeeds so well in these secondary elaborations that he reminds one of a surrealist painter turning out nightmares with the untroubled ease of a portrait painter doing society ladies. But arrested images, however powerful and scarifying, are not literature. It is a pity that Mr. Hawkes is so self-indulgent; gifted beyond dispute and disciplined in narrative skills, he ought to forget his theories and write a story with one unbreakable rule: *If it sounds weird, cut it out.*

The Crossing Point is mildly interesting, in the way a family album might be, or even an anthropological report: which is perhaps the explanation for the excessive enthusiasm of the uninformed English reviewers. It describes with apparent accuracy Anglo-Jewish society in a London suburb, establishing beyond dispute how bitter and destructive the pressure of the dominant culture can be, for those in an ethnic minority who try to retain their distinctive-

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ness as well as for those who yield it. Old Gabriel who destroys his four daughters through a refusal to acknowledge the attractive power of the non-Jewish twentieth-century world, ends a broken man, but Essie, the only one of his daughters who dares escape the double tyranny of her father and Jewish orthodoxy, finds that her triumph is marred, perhaps even empty.

The book does have a certain symptomatic interest. Miss Charles writes with the sincere conviction that she is faithfully recording the family life of English Jews: the family life as she has closely observed it and known it intimately. She conveys the clear sense of being in secure and total possession of her subject. Yet the form she has chosen—the loose chronicle novel, with its dragging pace, its slackness of tone, its excessive hospitality to casual anecdotes and promiscuous representation—proves to be not an easy and receptive medium but a screen between herself and the subject. Miss Charles writes in the belief that she is responding to what she knows and has seen all her life; but for the literate reader it is impossible to turn to this kind of conventional fiction without there intervening the memories of all sorts of other books which have been a staple of middlebrow fiction for over a century and the effect of which is largely to blur and weary.

Mr. Paul Herr is one of those chest-thumping, tough-talking and unutterably fierce novelists who concentrates on political adventure and assertions of virility. His book, which bristles with conspicuous manliness, makes its ostensible claim as a picaresque account of involvements in the great political crises of our time, from the Bergen Belsen concentration camp to Castro's revolution. Precisely why this sort of breathless recounting of yesterday's headlines is assumed to warrant a particular claim for virility is not clear: perhaps because Hemingway insisted and James M. Cain persisted. But if Mr. Herr's novel makes its claim in terms of public crises, our sense of these crises is always gained through the coarse screen of his hero's sensibility. In turn, however, the sensibility of this hero can be apprehended only as a function of the events that befall him: it is not there for any value or interest it might have in its own right.

Just as Mr. Hawkes loves his experiments and Miss Charles her family, so Mr. Herr loves finally nothing so much as himself,

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the flow of boastful platitude that winds through his pages. He writes, for example: "I consider God as one of those dangerous abstractions, like the State, Freedom, Truth and Justice, that cause us to behave worse than the beasts of the jungle," and it does not seem to occur to him, so delighted is he with this verbal bravado, that his commonplace reflections could ever have been thought or spoken before. His book is a noisy bore.

Miss Muriel Spark, severely comic and modestly depressing, is tidy to the point of compulsion, and whatever she sets out to do, she does. Entirely on her own, she is very much the unruffled, formidable lady novelist. She is, to be sure, a minor writer, but more from choice than necessity, for one comes to feel that her control is a willed constriction, that she refuses to surrender herself to the possibilities of her imagination and indeed, seems always to be beating it with a stick.

Miss Spark's method is to present a small, severely confined world as if it were the entirety of human existence and there were nothing beyond it for contrast or relief. In her earlier and extremely

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brilliant novel *Memento Mori* it was the world of the very old, so decisive in its impact that one could barely imagine life before the age of seventy; in *The Bachelors* it is the world of unmarried men in London, prissy and pusillanimous creatures living in an hermetic style.

Miss Spark, who knows that the novelist's first requirement is to be entertaining, works the unusualness of her subject for all it can yield: a weird exchange between two bachelors about the high price of herbs in the London stores as they shop on Saturday morning, a dead-pan discussion as to whether bachelors in the privacy of their apartments urinate in the sink, a very amusing scene in which a sex-hungry but sin-troubled bachelor who usually keeps the girls off by eating onions meets one who likes the smell.

As the plot moves along, Miss Spark arranges for the world of the bachelors to cross the pitiful world of spiritualism: there is a hint of a doubling of aridities. If Miss Spark is amiably mordant in showing the ways of the bachelors, she is at her most refinedly cruel in showing the cant, yet also the vague human aspirations behind the cant, of spiritualism. Her pictures of the spiritualist milieu bear a disconcerting resemblance to the inner life of the Communist movement; a quarrel at a seance between rival factions, the distance between inner elite ("the Interior Spiral") and manipulated followers ("the Wider Infinity"), and the special hymn to the dead: "We shall meet them all again by and by/By and by" sung to the tune of "She'll be Coming 'Round the Mountain."

Now all this is odd, perverse, farcical, as are the characters inhabiting this shabby demi-world: Patrick Seaton, the medium who does a spot of blackmail on the side yet in some frightening way is authentic, the widows who drape themselves round his frothing messages, the fruity school teacher for whom it is all an opportunity to spur the ladies into gossip and intrigue. Miss Spark describes these specimens with a mixture of sadism and restraint such as makes Mary McCarthy seem, by comparison, a nice good-natured lady. The sadism is of the kind that lets her characters ramble on and on, into total exposure and foolishness; the restraint of the kind that holds the sadism tightly in check so that it will not seem merely personal. And at no point does Miss Spark

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succumb to psychology, for that would mean to dissolve into pity or mere comprehension the brilliant gargoyles who comprise her characters.

Miss Spark is an artist of behavior and notation, concerned not with the depths of her characters but with their acted-out delusions. Above all, she is mistress of the art of dialogue. The basis for this skill is that feline cruelty I have already noted which permits her to record the talk of characters even after it has gone over-ripe. Most male writers would turn away in shame and compassion, but not Miss Spark.

But *The Bachelors* holds one's attention as more than a virtuoso performance. The world it presents, in compact miniature, is the wasteland made familiar by modern writing: the wasteland not expanded into horror but contracted into *ennui*. Miss Spark is an expert on minor emotional ailments, and knowing how much misery they cause, she feels no need to trouble with the more grandiose diseases of the soul. Like Jane Austen, she believes that an accumulation of venalities makes life odious, and throughout her novel one hears the steady drip of little meannesses, little deceits.

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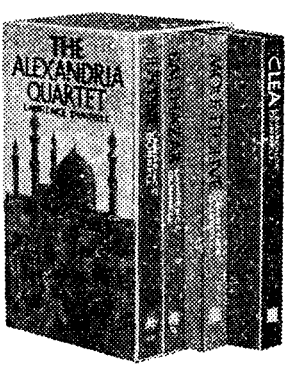

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In some very general sense, apart from their sharing in the Catholic faith, Miss Spark seems to have been influenced by Evelyn Waugh, but her literary method is almost the exact opposite of his, for where he explodes into wild satire she compresses into minute and painful comedy. But this difference in response is exacted by the same world, that world which in *The Bachelors* seems the ultimate in sterility of human purpose. Concerning this condition of life Miss Spark has some firm ideas. The main figure of the book, Ronald Bridges, who is an epileptic handwriting expert, (both his affliction and his skill seem meant to be suggestive) remarks at a crucial point: "There are only two religions, the spiritualist and the Catholic." He means this, he adds, "in a figurative sense." Now in the economy of the book Ronald stands for the restraint and steadfastness in the face of suffering that Catholicism allows, while the medium Patrick Seaton represents the diabolic receptivity to seizure and indulgence that spiritualism encourages. It is a contrast between grace and romanticism; but a contrast which, if the book invites us to see it in terms of doctrine, we are not forced to accept in order to see the book.

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well by doing good") was a villain of the deepest dye.

If today the dope peddler can be successfully portrayed as a champion of the needy, we have come a distance, too, in our view of the drug addict himself. Who can say exactly when the Dope Fiend, in the public's view, began to turn into the Junkie? The process has been gradual as ice thawing. Certainly Nelson Algren's *The Man With the Golden Arm* did much to promote the metamorphosis, when in 1949 it won a National Book Award and an international reputation. In a novel otherwise populated with quaint malapropists, the gambler Frankie Machine is a credible figure, at once more authentic and more vital than the book which contains him. The decline and fall of this shabby, brutal man, impaled on twin disasters of guilt and morphine, is an event of genuine pathos. Undoubtedly Algren's book, and the slick, gruesome movie to which it led, served better than a score of magazine articles to show the drug addict as not quite the urban werewolf our parents made him out to be.

Regardless of when he got here, the Junkie is here now, it recent literature is any guide

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Witness not only such beat-colored specimens as *The Connection,* as Alexander Trocchi's brilliant *Cain's Book,* as William Burrough's dadaist shocker *Naked Lunch,* but such non-beat examples as Michael Gazzo's Broadway hit *A Hatful of Rain,* or Willard Motley's best-selling *Let No Man Write my Epitaph* —all products of the last few years. The world of the addict is a very special, even esoteric, world. Yet how many laymen are nowadays privy to its grisly secrets? Perhaps millions have learned the recipe for cooking up a fix: the eyedropper, the hardened cotton, the bubbling spoon.

Archaic and savage narcotics laws have yet to catch up with the changing cultural image, but the fact remains that the image *is* changing. Our literature suggests that this nation in which Miltown sales yearly mount is increasingly sympathetic to, indeed fascinated by, its citizens who go the whole hog. The addict is nearer than ever before to social acceptance —if not in our cities, at least in our psyches.

What kind of fiction and plays has it all led to? The range is wide. It is possible to say, however, that in general the

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current literature about addiction falls into three markedly different categories: domestic melodrama, sociological naturalism, and hipster apologetics. The first type (*A Hatful of Rain* is an instance) focuses on the addict's anguished middle class family; their ordeal is questionably resolved by a timely ticket to Lexington. The second type (Motley's novel, for example) focuses on addiction as a tragic fruit of the slums. The third type focuses on the addict as somebody who knows something that you don't know.

How do we account for the literary interest in addiction, though? Explanations come to hand readily enough. On one level, the interest is civic: drugs *are* a national menace. On another level, it is humanitarian: addicts suffer hideously. The interest, again, is sentimental: the same alchemy which makes the Scarlet Woman into Suzie Wong and the Drunkard into the hero of *The Lost Weekend* is surely working to reduce the Dope Fiend as well to a comforting cliche.

Such explanations, however, do not account for the *intensity* of the interest; they do not express its deepest impulse. Its deepest impulse, while implicit

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in domestic melodrama and sociological naturalism, is to my view most directly conveyed by hipster apologetics. This should not be entirely surprising; the cruel sport of Beat baiting, after all, is popular because the Beats are popular. Their rebellion speaks straight to the hidden wishes of the vast middle class —and it is to the missionary zeal of the Beats that the widespread interest in addiction must in no small part be attributed.

The sovereign dogma of hipster apologetics is that if you score you know The Score. Whether the addict enjoys cosmic insight, or social insight, or both, depends on the New Barbarian you're reading at the moment, but all the Beat writers agree that the drug user, unlike the square, sees profoundly and truly into the heart of the matter. This is not to say that Beat writers, lovingly minute clinicians in depicting its horrors, necessarily proselytize for the narcotic. It is to say that their work invariably exalts the kind of perception which they associate with the addict himself.

The Connection, which for artistic honesty ranks highest in the post-war literature of addiction, affords a clear example of the way hipster apologetics

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renders the junk scene to the intrigued square as, for all its grimness, a sort of spiritual aristocracy. Many critics have noted the play's (ostensible) lack of Beat pre-judgement: "There are lousy hipsters and lousy squares," observes one of Gelber's addicts. That may be so, but the playwright doesn't show us any good squares, only good hipsters; the squares he shows us are either clumsy buffoons or twittering ninnies. Best of all it is, apparently, to be a good hipster, like Solly the erudite junkie, or Cowboy the straight shooter. That a serious alternative to their hip and heroin tinged vision of things exists, the play fails to suggest. "That's the way it is," intones, at intervals, the disembodied voice of a character at the back of the darkened theater, "that's the way it really is." Even viewed as brother under the skin to the tame bourgeois, the junkie is preserved in an aristocratic mantle. When one character declares that "the chlorophyll addicts, the aspirin addicts, the vitamin addicts, those people are hooked worse than me" (and the pious offstage voice certifies his words beyond appeal), it is obvious that the heroin fan knows it; the chlorophyll fan doesn't.

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For the workaday square, the appeal of hipster apologetics is not that it presents his own state mirrored in the addict but, rather, his own state romantically rectified. By dint of an exotic vice, the addict is propelled above and beyond the social process. His psychic height and distance give him overview of the big picture, denied to the square, who is down in the picture carrying bags home from the A. & P. and brooding about his light bill. The addict is way out of Squaresville's vicious circle. And in this, of course, he seems just a special version of the bourgeois's beatnik fantasy—but a morbid darkening of that fantasy. "We all pay our dues whatever we do," Cowboy euphemistically explains. The dues in Cowboy's club are extremely steep, and most non-users' instinctive animal loathing quite overbalances the attractions of membership. For many a Philistine, it is probably a kind of symbol of the dangers in acting out his wish-fulfilling beatnik fantasy.

The only trouble with the image of the junkie in hipster apologetics is that it shares with Jack Kerouac's image of the American Negro the defect of being untrue. Sociologists, psychiatrists and pharmacologists may be square, but they rather than our Beat authors must be accepted as the experts. Drug addicts are not, as a class, hip. The large majority have not, like all Gelber's junkies, read *On the Road* (in fairness to Gelber, his play implies nothing about its characters' typicality), nor are more than a small fraction of them even professional or amateur jazz musicians. It is safe to say that addicts are, as a class, inarticulate, born economically marginal, and quite without insight into the civilization which is to blame for their illness.

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then, hipster apologetics draws a romantic picture. Indeed, the New Bohemians themselves, like any other segment of the middle class, overwhelmingly favor the bottle over the needle. To be sure, there really are suicidal hipsters like those in *The Connection,* but they are the relatively *rarae aves* of American addiction.

But even if they weren't so rare, they would still share the nature of the whole bird species: the drug addict is not an oracle, but a victim. Though we are all in one way or another victims, the effect of hipster apologetics, since it ignores the economic and social roots of the addict's victimization (and, thus, his affinity with the non-addict), and endows him with a swinging, cynical knowingness in which no mere square can partake, is to turn the Junkie back into the Dope Fiend. And, since the hip junkie seems to have *elected* heroin out of cool hip awareness, the square is not apt to feel especially responsible for his tribulations.

Still, the nation is getting hooked on the Junkie. Again and again our authors lay his raffish secrets bare. In this mass culture, apparently, there is room even for the last of the traditional pariahs. While contemporary culture can domesticate the traditional pariahs, it can also mistake their identities almost as grossly as our forefathers did. Judging by much of the current literary evidence, the Junkie has suffered this ironical misfortune. The addict's anguish elicits a horrified shudder, and his outlaw's wiseness evokes a poignant throb of envy—in the square these are starts of non-recognition and non-responsibility. Indeed, that's one of the main charms of the cult of the goldenarmed oracle: the square needn't be responsible at all.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Fact and Fiction: A Gentlemen's Disagreement

SIRS:

I feel that some protest must be made against Mr. Colin MacInnes's worthless article "English Queerdom" [PR January-February, 1961].

The word "queer" itself is to be noted. It is, of course, a word on a par with "nigger," "kike," "wop" and "spic." That such a pathetic and mean hate-word should be considered savory by not only the author, but, we must assume, the editors, is to me a symptom of the same moral paralysis which seeks to explain Pound's love of the word "kike" as *literary*.

In his article Mr. MacInnes gives a "guess" as to the extent of homosexual activity in England, a portrait of the attitudes of the four classes in English society (each class coming forward like a member of a Gilbert and Sullivan quartet and giving its attitude), a portrait of the seven (7) types of homosexual underworld with several poignant vignettes worthy of a novelist (e.g. "socks salesman glamorously sipping half pints of pale ale in plastic postures"). How many of the men are socks salesmen? Do any of the socks salesmen drink *whole* pints of *dark* ale and sit *upright?* The amount of detail is itself suspicious, reminding one of the advice of teachers in writing classes to put in lots of detail to assure the reader of the credibility of the narrative. Mr. MacInnes's narrative ends with portrait in depth of "the exclusive homosexual" (i.e. "he most admires and covets a man who does not love men"), showing the detrimental effects of "exclusive homosexuality." "He is doomed," Mr. MacInnes informs us, "to a half-ignorant, ill-proportioned vision of mankind." (Unlike the heterosexual Mr. MacInnes.) Michelangelo is given as an example. We are not informed as to how Mr. MacInnes was able to find out the "exclusiveness" of Michelangelo's homosexuality. Finally, we are rewarded with the conclusion of Mr. MacInnes's researches: *"in a balanced view the queers' problem doesn't amount to much."* (My italics.)

What rot!!!!!

From what "balance" has Mr. MacInnes obtained this view? He has shown the wretched injustice by which a sizeable proportion of the English population is classified as "criminal." This is injustice. *Why* doesn't it amount to much? Does he mean that it does not amount to much for the large majority who are heterosexual? Does the Negro problem in America, likewise, "not amount to much" for the whites?

I find Mr. MacInnes's knowledgeableness likewise questionable. He has guessed at the number of "exclusive" homosexuals in Britain (one assumes that all those who are "queers" are those who are "exclusive"). On what has he based this figure? He gives us no criteria.

Again, he seems acquainted with all levels of a *maquis* formed by the homosexuals, where they allow each other recognition by "cabalistic" signs. Shades of the *Protocols!* If

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"the queers" have formed such an underworld — which I doubt — I would assume that a former "queer," a renegade, so to speak, would inform. What are these "cabalistic" signs? Would Mr. MacInnes inform us, or has he promised the "queers" not to "tell" on them?

The amount of information that we are able to gather in our lives is small. The number of people that we can know, to any depth, is also diminutive. We are not to blame for this. It is the human condition. As a novelist Mr. MacInnes is obliged to invent. However he should be warned, when he steps into the field of journalism, that if he invents, his inventions may collide with existing realities.

Leo Skir

SIRS:

If Mr. Skir would do me the kindness of reading my *June In Her Spring* (London, MacGibbon & Kee, 1952, or Ace Books 1960), he will learn why I am able to write on this theme with understanding. The other matters in his letter are already answered, by anticipation, in the article he criticizes, had he been able to read it with intelligence and imagination.

Colin MacInnes

EDITORS' NOTE:
"The Western Theme," by Robert B. Heilman, which appeared in the March-April, 1961 issue of PR, originally appeared in the *Northwest Review*.

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